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THE CHRISTIAN IDEA  
OF ATONEMENT



# THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF ATONEMENT

LECTURES DELIVERED AT  
REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE, LONDON, IN 1903

BY  
T. VINCENT TYMMS, D.D.  
(ST. ANDREWS)  
PRINCIPAL OF RAWDON COLLEGE

*Moral influence view - ?*

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## THE ANGUS LECTURESHIP

IN CONNECTION WITH REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE.

THE REV. JOSEPH ANGUS, D.D., was President of the College, formerly at Stepney, and now at Regent's Park, from 1849 to 1893. He was eminent as a Scholar; a member of the New Testament Revision Committee; an Author whose books had a wide circulation; a sagacious and trusted leader of the Baptist churches.

The Lectureship which bears his name had its origin in a Testimonial offered to him on the completion of thirty years' service as President. At his own request the money then contributed was devoted to the establishment of a permanent Lectureship in connection with the College, to secure the delivery of periodic lectures on great questions connected with Systematic, Practical, or Pastoral Theology.

The appointment of Lecturers rests with the Trustees and the College Committee jointly. It need scarcely be added that for the opinions advanced in any of the Lectures, the individual Lecturer is alone responsible.

## PREFACE

THE present volume contains the substance of eight Lectures which were delivered in May, 1903, but, as previously arranged with the Angus Trustees, it includes much additional matter. The closing Lecture on Justification was not delivered, the seventh, on The Significance of Christ's Death, was divided into two parts, and other Lectures were given in an abbreviated form.

I have not founded my discussion of the Atonement on the Fatherhood of God, although to my mind this expresses the most fundamental as well as the loveliest conception of God's relationship to us, and nothing at variance with it can be predicated of Him. But our Father in Heaven is also the blessed and only Potentate, the Lawgiver, Judge, and King of all the earth. Each of these analogical titles represents an aspect of the Deity which should never be ignored, and each is associated with a set of correlative terms which cannot be disused without loss, and become incongruous if intermixed. Hence it

appears preferable to found our discussions on a definition of the Divine Nature rather than upon any relative term, however beautiful. God must always be the same in all His relations, and under all the analogical forms in which these can be partially expressed. Therefore, when we start with a definition of His nature, we have a clue to the harmonious interpretation of all the names and titles which have been multiplied, to give breadth and fulness to our faith.

My sincere thanks are due to the Rev. Archibald Bisset, of Ratho Manse, Midlothian, and to my esteemed colleagues, the Rev. Professor Glass, M.A., and the Rev. Professor Medley, M.A., who have rendered valuable assistance in the preparation of these Lectures for the Press.

T. V. T.

RAWDON COLLEGE,  
*March, 1904.*



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# THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF ATONEMENT

## INTRODUCTORY

EIGHT hundred years ago Anselm was reluctantly persuaded to supply an answer to the question, *Cur Deus Homo?* For several centuries thought upon this deep mystery of the Gospel had been almost stagnant. A debased theology diverted attention from the significance of Christ's work for men, to those sacrificial masses which were offered by priests, and those laborious prayers and works which were imposed on penitents as the conditions of pardon by the Church. But late in the eleventh century there was a new stirring of religious thought. Small communities were gathered outside the ecclesiastical fold, and were persecuted for heresy; while many who remained inside began to ask questions to which the dominant Church had no replies. Most notably they inquired: Why did

Christ come into the world? How could His death avail for man's salvation?

The two facts that Anselm was plied with these questions, and that he made a most memorable attempt to answer them, mark an epoch in the history of Christian thought. The Reformation was still far distant, but this turning of men's hearts towards Christ was a sign that the dark age was ready to pass away, and the dawn of a new day at hand.

Since then men have never ceased to ask the same solemn questions, and many have aspired to give a satisfactory reply, yet, strange to say, no answer has sufficed to stop this questioning. To-day more people are asking, and more are answering than ever, but no one dares to think that his reply is final and complete. Few seekers after truth are thoroughly content with any answer they have heard, and many capable thinkers declare that no answer has been or ever will be found, and that the darkness which surrounds the Cross is a Divine obscurity into which it is useless and dangerous for the human intellect to intrude. Let us be satisfied, they plead, to hear the voice of mercy which speaks to our hearts from Calvary, and desist from all attempts to frame an intellectual theory of Atonement. It is enough to believe that Christ suffered on our behalf, and that in His name repentance is granted, and remission of sins proclaimed to every creature.

There is a large element of truth in this plea.

The history of Christianity demonstrates that Christ crucified, and not any theory of Atonement, is the power of God unto salvation. The fervent heat of sacrificial love has passed into human hearts through teachings which have sadly failed to transmit the rays of intellectual light. Thus spiritual life has survived, and borne rich fruit in at least a few rare saints, even in the darkest ages of the Church. But while these facts are indisputable, and in their way consolatory, they afford no adequate support to the plea so often based upon them.

Those who deprecate attempts to elucidate the principle of Atonement appear to overlook a most vital distinction between the conditions of individual salvation and the conditions of victorious Christian work. It would be unworthy of a great God to base the forgiveness of sin upon an intellectual grasp of the mysteries of His kingdom, for in this case only theologians could be saved. A message sent from Heaven to a world like this could not be a gospel unless its essential meaning were simple enough to be appreciated, and taken down into the heart by feeble and uncultured people. We may well thank God that His good tidings can be revealed to "babes and sucklings," and are hidden from the "wise and prudent" until humbled to become as little children. But Christianity makes provision for something more than bare salvation. Its most characteristic note is discipleship, and the Master's method is to treat His followers as friends to whom all His thoughts and

plans may be confided, thus fitting them to become fellow-workers with the Truth in the recovery and enlightenment of the world. We are well assured that none will perish because of crude thinking, but the power of the Church to propagate her faith is largely dependent on her power to commend the great truths of the Gospel to the understanding as well as to the hearts of men.

This principle is written large in the history of the Reformation. The great power of the Reformers lay in the fact that they cleared away a mass of traditional teaching, which tended to obstruct personal relations between individual souls and Christ. They did not clear away all the semi-pagan rubbish which had gathered round the Cross, but they removed much, and with no faltering voice they directed men to look to Christ for wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Their statements of doctrine were not made in unison. The chief leaders were strongly opposed to each other's teachings on important subjects, and none of them was perfectly consistent in the development of his own doctrinal system ; but they were all of one accord in setting forth Christ and Him crucified as the sole and all-sufficient object of faith. The great outstanding fact of the epoch is that Christ was preached, and that multitudes were taught to say :

"Thou O Christ art all I want  
More than all in Thee I find."

But as time passed men became more painfully aware of their differences and less conscious of their



agreement. Hence controversies arose; criticism became keener, more general, and, worst of all, more acrimonious. Sects multiplied. Official creeds stereotyped expressions of opinion which became tests of fellowship and divisional banners. To-day there is a strong yearning to reverse this deplorable process; to abandon strife, to make less of differences, and to unite more widely for fraternal intercourse and common service on the ground of a common loyalty to Jesus Christ as Lord of all.

But while rejoicing in this healthful movement of the Christian spirit, we cannot disguise the fact that the reuniting hosts are not exerting such a commanding power as might have been expected. Churches are not conscious of augmenting influence. On all sides men are asking why such vast numbers absent themselves from public worship. Cries of weakness are heard from trusted leaders, and thousands are depressed as when standard-bearers faint upon the field.

The causes assigned for these discouraging facts are manifold, and most of them are, I believe, really operative, so that no short and simple explanation can be given of what is obviously a most complex problem. It is not my intention to discuss this grave question, but no one will controvert the statement that one of the most potent causes of the evil is a widespread enfeeblement of confidence in the Bible as a treasury of Divine Revelation.

But here, again, we have to recognise complexity,

for this diminished confidence in the Bible is not traceable to any single cause. By many it is set down to the unsettling effects of the Higher Criticism ; but others retort by throwing the blame on those who entrench themselves behind a theory of Scripture, which not only critics but thousands of illiterate people have rejected as incredible. The uncertainty of mind produced by this controversy is widespread, and for the time being its effects are calamitous. But if this were all, we might hope for an early recovery of confidence. Nothing can permanently weaken the real authority of the Bible, which is compatible with reverence for its religious teachings. Martin Luther anticipated some of the supposed results of recent criticism respecting the authorship, dates, and composite character of several books. Yet his faith flourished and was potent in its works. The members of the Society of Friends are less unanimous than formerly in accepting Robert Barclay's doctrine of Scripture, but it still represents the views of a large majority, and it keeps them in characteristic peace as calm spectators of the present strife.

These facts encourage a belief that the evangelical churches would not find their position weakened if they were to put themselves more in accord with Martin Luther, and in some respects with the Society of Friends.

But a deeper and more formidable cause of mistrust, which the Higher Criticism did not originate, is at work, and would remain, and be equally

operative if the Higher Criticism were silenced : viz., the intense repugnance which is felt by an ever-growing number of people to certain doctrines which the Bible is supposed to teach ; and of these the most vital are those which relate to the redemptive value and significance of the Death of Christ.

The state of opinion on this subject is not easily definable, because modes of expression are marvelously varied, but the main question at issue can be given without prejudice to particular differences. The theory of Atonement, which for several centuries has been widely upheld as the true doctrine of Scripture, is one which identifies vicarious suffering with vicarious punishment. Careful defenders of this view refrain from saying that Christ was punished, but they draw a distinction, which simple minds have some difficulty in appreciating, by saying that although Christ was not punished He bore the punishment of man's sin ; and that He bore this for our salvation, because if God were to forego the execution of the death penalty, He would thereby violate His own immutable justice and falsify His threatenings. Teachers of this school differ much in their account of the effect produced on God's mind by the sacrifice of Christ, the persons for whom it was offered, and the manner in which its benefits are distributed ; but they are of one accord in declaring that God can righteously forgive sin, only because the extreme sentence of the law has been inflicted upon a sinless substitute.

We are sometimes told by sanguine Christian thinkers of another school that this theory of Atonement is obsolete and therefore negligible; but this is preposterously untrue to the facts. This theory remains in the standards of numerous Denominations, and in the trust deeds of many churches and colleges. Its fundamental principle is taught explicitly in some of the most widely used text-books of theology, and implicitly by many writers and preachers who perhaps too carefully soften its terminology. True or false, fashionable or unfashionable, it represents the convictions of a countless host of Christians, and outside the churches there is a widespread impression that it is the actual doctrine of Scripture, and that those who repudiate it on ethical grounds do thereby, consciously or unconsciously, pronounce an adverse judgment on the religious value of the Bible.

Those who take this view are in my judgment totally mistaken, but they are confirmed in it by the language and attitude of many influential leaders of Christian thought. Horace Bushnell, for example, to whom I shall have to refer more fully hereafter, plainly declared that the language of Scripture accords with the pagan idea of propitiating God by sacrifice, yet he denounced this idea on ethical grounds, and sought to escape the dilemma thus created, by asserting that the New Testament writers did not really mean what their words mean! Without going so far as this many theologians and practically all the Higher critics profess to find this

idea of propitiation in the Old Testament ritual codes, and contrast it with the teaching of the prophets. Almost all who reject the Penal Theory of Atonement do so on ethical grounds, and few attempt to interpret such terms as Propitiation, Atonement, and Redemption, in harmony with their own conception of God's character, or make any serious effort to explain the prominent way in which the blood of Christ is connected in the New Testament with the remission of sins. Many preachers are silent on these subjects, and betray a dislike of theology, and a marked preference for semi-political, social, literary, or at best ethical themes for pulpit discourse. Others affirm that the Scriptures certainly declare that Christ propitiated God, but manifest some aversion to the pagan sense of this expression, and say that only God Himself can know what this word means in relation to Himself.

It is not strange that in view of these rather sinister facts, vast numbers of people conclude that the Scriptures really do teach the doctrine which so many Christian teachers disavow or silently avoid, and so many more express in euphemistic terms ; nor is it strange that a suspicion should be abroad that many who detest it most are nevertheless aware that it is scriptural.

In my judgment the gravest peril to Christian faith in the coming generation proceeds from this impression that Biblical authority and enlightened morality are in opposition. If I perceived any real antagonism between these two forces, I should have

no hesitation in predicting how the strife would end, or in choosing my own side in the conflict. No external authority can justify a refusal to obey that Divine faculty within us which is our chief protection against temptation and delusion. By this faculty we discern the difference between good and evil, between Christ and other masters of the soul. By our fidelity to the mandates of this kingly power we shall eternally judge ourselves, and thereby we shall be judged with infallible rectitude by God. By this faculty we ask Mohammedans, Hindus, and others to judge their sacred books and the religions under which they have grown up. By this we ask them to approve the majesty and glory of the God and Father whom we worship, and to recognise the Divine beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the long run all religious systems and all thoughts and customs which this faculty condemns will be consumed out of the earth ; and unless the doctrine of Atonement, actually taught in the Bible, can abide the fire already kindled, it will be among the things that perish.

My own conviction is that the Christian idea of Atonement has no resemblance to the dogma commonly identified with this great word, and that the more severely the language of Scripture is examined the more vividly apparent it will be that the one is not merely a travesty, but a direct contradiction of the other. My endeavour in the following Lectures will be to set forth the grounds of this conviction.

The method adopted is not expository, but my

supreme aim will be to elucidate the teachings of Scripture in relation to every stage of the argument to be constructed. The facts already stated make it obvious that no study of the subject can be satisfactory to Christians or anti-Christians or to the neutral multitude unless distinctly Biblical. The views to which so many object on ethical grounds are professedly derived from the ancient archives of the Christian faith, and those who hold them dear are impervious to arguments or denunciations based on supposed ethical principles, or on speculative ideas of what God is, or ought to be, or can reasonably be supposed to require. On the other hand, those who reprobate them will not be reconciled to Christianity by any theory, however beautiful, which is not convincingly presented as a true rendering of Christian ideas, as contained in the only books which have the slightest pretensions to be regarded as authentic and original sources of information. Should a fresh review of the Scriptures bring to light a doctrine of Atonement which preserves all that is precious in the Gospel that "God loved us and sent His Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins," while excluding from its interpretation every element which is incongruous with the Fatherhood of God, and with the spontaneity and freeness of His mercy, it will do more than anything else to add boldness and fervour to many preachers: and if in relation to this doctrine we find ethical harmony and a continuity of thought running through the sacred

literature of the Hebrew people, so that as many of its authors as treat of Atonement or Propitiation are agreed with one another, and while thus agreed among themselves are absolutely unique in the purity and beauty of their doctrine ; such a result will not only remove a burden from many minds, but will exhibit a marvellous evidence of the spiritual unity of the Bible, and do more than any discourse on inspiration to restore a childlike trust in this peerless volume as a God-provided Book which is worthy of all veneration and obedience as the guide of life.



## LECTURE I

### REVIEW OF THEORIES

WHEN dealing with controversial subjects, and particularly in the study of Christian truth, I hold it wise to spare no pains in widening to its utmost bounds that region which may be called the common-land of belief. By adopting this course we are saved all needless discussion of apparent differences, and of differences which, though not unreal, are comparatively unimportant. By this means, also, mutual respect and sympathy, and a practical alliance among all Christians are carried to their utmost legitimate limits, and differences being reduced to a truthful minimum, the task of conciliation is advanced.

I shall, as far as possible, adhere to this sound rule in the following endeavour to unfold the Mystery of the Gospel which lies hidden for our finding in Him who came into the world "to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matt., xx. 28.) Certainly I shall say nothing willingly to accentuate differences or to win partisan sympathy, but, on the other hand, I shall eschew those too common arts of "Conciliation" which

conceal or belittle differences by dexterous definitions, and still more dexterous indefiniteness of phrase and terms, and sacrifice truth to amity rather than amity to truth. Nothing but light can bring about the amity of Christian men, and "whatsoever doth make manifest" even vital differences is light. This conviction forbids me to reduce our study of Christ's work to a mere examination of theories, but it also forbids me to shrink from criticising any opinions which seriously obstruct our advance along a line of independent and constructive thought. Governed by these considerations, I propose to glance briefly at current theories of Atonement, as usually classified, to observe how they stand related to each other, and to deal with one class as far as may be necessary to determine the first principles on which all subsequent discussions must be based.

Theories of Atonement are usually divided into three main classes, which may conveniently be labelled: (1) Penal; (2) Governmental; (3) Moral.

The first of these classes has its distinctive note in the assertion that Christ's sufferings were essentially penal, and that they constitute a satisfaction of God's justice as an actual endurance of the punishment of the sins of men. This essential principle is expounded in various terms, and these variations have occasioned many polemical battles, but all sections unite in affirming that Christ bore the punishment of human sin, and that only because of this can God forego the inflic-

tion of eternal death on each individual transgressor.

The second class includes all theories which deny that the sufferings of Christ were penal, but recognise that the forgiveness of any sinner, however obscure, is not a mere personal transaction between the individual man and God, but one which affects the stability of God's Throne, and must therefore not only be right in itself, but must be justified to the moral universe. Advocates of this principle differ widely in their conception and expression of what is involved in such a justification of Divine mercy, and in their exposition of what Christ did and suffered to effect it, but they are at one in the assertion that Christ did suffer to render forgiveness possible without any weakening of God's authority as King. Advocates of the penal view of Christ's suffering do not deny that there is great truth in the governmental view, but they deny that by itself it is adequate or scriptural, because, as they contend, nothing can vindicate God's justice, or sustain His royal authority, except an actual and inexorable punishment of all and every sin.

Theories of the third class are numerous and varied, but all agree in regarding the sufferings of Christ as solely designed and fitted to exert a moral influence on sinful men, and to reunite them to God by inducing repentance, by awakening faith and love, and so inspiring a life of filial obedience. Many exponents of this type of theory denounce the penal theory of the Atonement as intrinsically

immoral and grossly at variance with the character of God as revealed in Scripture, and as verified by man's purest intuitions of what is truly great and good. They dismiss the regal or governmental theory as a needless complication of the subject, on the ground that God's honour and authority need no defence except the simple exercise of righteousness, mercy, and lovingkindness in the earth. Feeble kings, they admit, may need to explain and vindicate their actions, but the Divine King can afford to let His government magnify itself as its purity dissolves obscuring clouds and fills the earth with its glory. The only difficulty which in their judgment God can have in forgiving sin is the difficulty of bringing the sinner into a state of moral preparedness to be forgiven, and this, say all who hold a purely ethical theory of the Atonement, is the one hindrance to salvation which Christ came into the world, and lived, worked, and died to overcome.

There is some convenience in this classification, but it must be employed with caution. It truly represents three types of theological doctrine, but theologians cannot correspondingly be grouped, without grave injustice, because many hold two, and some hold all three of these views in various modes of combination, and with different additions, subtractions and explanations. All parties have some common standing ground in affirming the ethical object and effect of Christ's work. Anti-Christian writers have denounced the Gospel as immoral in its tendencies, and some

Christians have indulged in language which has gone far to excuse if not to justify the imputation. But even those who have spoken most slightly of conduct, and treated salvation as an escape from punishment rather than a redemption from iniquity, have always pictured Heaven as a holy place, into which no defilement can enter. The most extreme antinomian who ever wallowed in sin, while boasting his possession of a wedding garment in the imputed righteousness of Christ, has always expected to become actually Christlike in character, when delivered by death and resurrection from the flesh and from the temptations of the world.

It would be most unfair and misleading, therefore, to regard those who believe in the penal nature of Christ's sufferings as thereby committed to a denial of their ethical tendency and purpose. What they deny is: (1) that our moral rectification was the immediate and chief end of Christ's work, and (2) that this end could have been attained apart from the endurance of our punishment by Christ. They affirm that when this particular form of substitution has been cut out from their Gospel, nothing is left which can cleanse the conscience and create a new heart.

A similar remark holds good in regard to those who hold a governmental theory. They, too, believe in the ethical object of Christ's work; but while denying that Christ suffered penally, they agree in saying that even the ethical power of His death would have been ineffective had it not upheld

the King's authority, while also commending His love.

Taking a comparative view of these three types of theory, it becomes evident that the third stands alone in two important respects: (1) It is universally admitted to express at least a part of the truth; (2) It alone, is maintained to be a sufficient theory of Christ's work without any need of supplement. On this account it might seem expedient to begin our study by surveying and mapping out to its utmost extent this common land of Christian belief, leaving differences for treatment later on. But for many reasons I am unable to adopt this course. (1) It would unduly postpone a discussion of those questions to which seekers after truth are most eager to find an answer. (2) Such a policy would defeat its own friendly design because, while we were dwelling on points which none dispute, deferred questions would incessantly haunt and perturb our minds, and would, I fear, suggest doubts of the value and even the sincerity of much that might be said. (3) The first type of theory raises an issue which must be settled before any profitable discussion of the others can be carried on; and if decided favourably would render any further discussion superfluous. Given the truth of the first type of theory, the others, *as theories of Atonement*, would disappear, and we could only treat them as branches which grow out of, and receive their life and fruitfulness from, the root principle discovered in the first. Therefore, however much we may dislike

polemics, however earnestly we may long for unity, and however sure we may be that Christ crucified, and not a theory of the Cross, can save men's souls, we must not shrink from, or defer our examination of, what is affirmed to be almost an axiom, and certainly a first principle of Christianity—a massive bed-rock of truth on which alone a Biblical theory of the Atonement can be upbuilt.

The principle we have to examine may be summed up in the proposition *that the Divine nature demands the inexorable and invariable punishment of all sin.* Out of this proposition the penal theory of Atonement is naturally and inevitably developed. If all sin must be punished, there must be someone to bear the punishment; and if the sinner is not to bear it himself, someone else must be found to bear it in his room and stead. The logic is sound, clear, and obvious, and it can be refuted only by a denial of the major premiss.

Prior to any satisfactory discussion of this proposition, it is necessary to gain a clear view of its actual meaning and force, and to distinguish it from another statement with which it is commonly but most illogically confounded, viz., that sin inherently and for its own sake deserves punishment. These propositions are manifestly not identical, but a denial of the first is not seldom denounced as a denial of the second, and thus all who deny that God's nature demands the inexorable punishment of sin are held up to suspicion as teachers of the so-called "Socinian Doctrine," "that sin does not

inherently and for its own sake deserve punishment.”<sup>1</sup>

But this is not only unjust but inconsequent. The question at issue relates to the remission of penalties, not to the treatment which sin deserves. Those who affirm that God's nature permits and inclines Him to remit punishment under certain conditions do thereby confess and affirm that sin deserves punishment, for this is included in the idea of remission. The question to be discussed is not “What does sin deserve?” but “Is God bound by His own righteous nature always to deal with us after our sins, and to reward us according to our iniquities?”

If it were necessary to enforce the truth that sin inherently deserves punishment, I should at this point concentrate all my powers upon the task. But such an effort would be a waste of words. The very idea of sin carries with it the idea of ill-desert, as every awakened conscience knows. Men who lamentably fail to judge themselves aright, and are somewhat dull to discern the finer shades of moral quality in others, are swift to condemn all flagrant misdeeds, and often clamour for the punishment of gross offenders. Multitudes who have no high degree of moral sensitiveness are moved to indignation when they behold wickedness triumphant in the world, and they show their conviction that sin deserves punishment by crying out—“How can there be a righteous God in Heaven, who sees and is able to smite such evil doers and yet

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 1.



allows them to survive and flourish? In the light of such moral phenomena it requires some hardihood to assert that sin does not inherently deserve punishment. The idea of sin as implying ill-desert may be rejected by Materialists and Pantheists, and by all who deny the freedom of the will; but such a denial of what is given to men in consciousness is on a par with the denial of an external universe, or the principle of causation. It is a speculative quibble which has no effect upon the conduct of any sane man in dealing with his fellows on the basis of mutual rights and obligations. We may treat it, therefore, as an axiom of Christianity that sin inherently and of itself deserves punishment; but this leaves it an open question whether God's nature demands that punishment shall always be inflicted.<sup>1</sup>

The first observation which suggests itself to anyone acquainted with the history of Christian thought is that the Church was singularly slow in discovering the principle now before us. We are told that it is a fundamental doctrine of Scripture, and yet, confessedly, it was never formulated until the twelfth century, and never stated to the satisfaction of its modern advocates until the sixteenth century. The early fathers freely quoted texts of Scripture which are now supposed to teach this doctrine, but those most anxious to prove the antiquity of their dogma are obliged to own that, as

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 2.

tested by their own standard, "Patristic theology exhibits but an imperfect theoretic comprehension of the most fundamental truth in the Christian system," and that "the judicial reasons and grounds of this death of the most exalted of personages were left to be investigated and exhibited in later ages and by other generations of theologians."<sup>1</sup>

For some purposes this frank admission would dispense with any need for an independent historical review of ancient and mediæval opinion. But the late formulation of the dogma is not the only suspicious and damaging fact. It did not spring into existence without some antecedent process of development, and when correctly traced this process is itself an argument against the legitimacy of any dogma it assisted to produce.

The first fact to be mentioned will be very unwelcome to many, viz., that Marcion, the most famous heretic of the second century, was the earliest, and, in important respects, the truest precursor of Anselm in the Ante-Nicene period. He was a man of splendid powers and lofty aspirations, yet in his endeavours to purify the Church he stooped to unworthy methods, and in the pursuit of wisdom he devised foolish theories. His supreme desire was to elevate the love of God into its true place as the cardinal doctrine of Christ, and to deliver the Gospel from all that was obsolete in Judaism. Unhappily he started with a sentimental idea of love, and was thus compelled to regard

<sup>1</sup> Shedd, *History of Doctrine*, vol. ii., 212.

justice as a foreign and even antagonistic principle, instead of recognising that it is a constituent element of love itself. Reasoning from this defective basis, he was driven to conclude that the Divine Father who forgives and saves through Christ is not the same being as the God who commands and punishes according to the revelation of the Old Testament. Rather than forego his faith in the loving Father, he therefore dealt violently with the Scriptures, and made havoc of Monotheism. He taught that the Creator was an austere Being, the personification of relentless legal justice, who was determined to punish man for disobedience to His law. On this account the Father pitied us, and sent His Son Jesus Christ to reveal His name for the first time to mankind, and to redeem us from our hard Master. By His sufferings Christ satisfied the claims of the Just God, and bought us for the Father. Thus man was the Debtor, the Creator and Law Giver was the Creditor, the Father was the Buyer, and the death of Christ was the price paid. Thus Marcion's theory has a painful resemblance to Anselm's account of the relations between Christ and God. Its theism is different, but its conception of Atonement is the same.

The general trend of Patristic thought was to regard Christ's sufferings as endured to redeem us from the clutches of the Devil, rather than as a satisfaction of Divine justice, or as a propitiation offered to the Father. Irenæus is often referred to

as one of the most representative exponents of this view, but this is inaccurate. What he really taught was that in accordance with the promise given to Eve in Paradise, it was essential that Satan should be conquered by a man "born of a woman," that this conquest (not the compensation) of Satan was the object of the Incarnation, and was accomplished on our behalf by Christ, who also enables us to repeat His victory. Irenæus admitted no right of possession on Satan's part, but perceived that a merely forcible snatching of man from his grasp would be unsatisfactory, and would not constitute a real redemption from the power of evil. Hence, he taught, though a little obscurely, that our rescue from the kingdom of the adversary is effected by the persuasive power of Christ's death, whereby we are induced to voluntarily forsake the service of the Evil One, so reversing the process by which man entered into bondage at the first. He regarded it as a proof of God's justice that even against Satan He would adopt no measures which were violent rather than moral. The thought may be crude, but it has no resemblance to the idea of satisfaction rendered to an evil being, or to a harsh and implacable Creator, and has nothing in common with the modern idea of a satisfaction rendered to the justice of God by the Son.

Origen was the first Christian thinker, whose writings are extant, to concede that the Devil had any just claim to the ownership of men. He represented the Evil One as being duped by God

into a bad bargain. He said that God agreed to give Christ in exchange for men because He foresaw that Satan would be unable to keep the sinless Christ in his hands, and would, therefore, have nothing in return for the captives he had sold. This theory commended itself to an age of low moral ideals, and it seems to have been the source of no little mirth as a sort of Divine joke at the Devil's expense. I cannot dismiss Origen's name without deprecating any contemptuous judgment of his quality because of this perverted conception of redemption. He failed to free his mind from some of the ruling ideas of his age, but he was a man of genius, who consecrated his powers to the service of Christ, and nobly served the Church in his day and generation.

Tertullian was the first Christian author who wrote distinctly of satisfactions offered to God, and of offerings which avail to appease God's anger, but, according to him, these are to be presented not by Christ but by men, and must consist of good works such as fasting, celibacy, and other mortifications of the flesh and spirit. He had a high opinion of the value of baptism for the washing away of previous sins in all who duly receive it, but in his counsels to those about to be baptised he thus prescribed a preparatory discipline. "They who are about to enter baptism ought to pray with repeated prayers, and bendings of the knee, and vigils all the night through, also with confession of all past sins . . . for we do at the same time *both make satisfaction*

*for our former sins* by mortification of our flesh and spirit, and lay beforehand the foundation of defences against the temptations which will surely follow.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly in reference to prayer he wrote, “we are not only praying, but deprecating, and *making satisfaction to God* our Lord.”<sup>2</sup> Tertullian’s object was commendable. He wished baptism to be a sincere and solemn expression of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and he thought to guard against an empty and dangerous formalism in two ways: (1) by protesting against the tendency to hasten the baptism of young children, who could not ask for the rite with an intelligent idea of its meaning; and (2) by calling upon all to whom the ordinance was granted to confess their sins before the Church, and to both deepen and evince their penitence by watching and prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Unfortunately his remedy became an aggravation of the disease. As the Church, through her officers, increasingly claimed the power of absolution, and proportionately ceased to impress on men the obligation and privilege of personal relations with a God to whom all things are naked and open, the importance of these painful and laborious “satisfactions” increased. It may indeed be freely conceded that on the hypothesis that the Church possessed such functions as she claimed, her object in claiming these satisfactions as guarantees of sincerity was commendable. The human tribunal, unlike God, could not go

<sup>1</sup> De Baptismo, xx.

<sup>2</sup> De Oratione, xxiii.

behind men's lip professions, and therefore sagaciously guarded the confessional against sham penitence. But by inevitable stages the outward satisfaction became a substitute for the penitence it was originally devised to attest, and all the false ideas thus generated of loss or suffering as a consideration given for pardon passed into theology as an explanation of the vicarious sufferings of Christ. Such a development was far removed from Tertullian's thought, but it was his misfortune, and in some degree his fault, to introduce into the Church this pagan germ, which found a fertile seed-plot in the ecclesiastical system which centred its authority in Rome.

Cyprian did much to develop the doctrine of satisfactions, and in his works it figures prominently. He lays down the fundamental principle that sins committed before baptism are therein purged through the blood and sanctification of Christ, but that in order to obtain mercy for subsequent sins God must be propitiated by constant and ceaseless labour. He sustains this view by quoting *Ecclus. iii. 30*, "Water will quench a flaming fire, and alms make atonement for sin."<sup>1</sup> Confessing that post-baptismal sins must inevitably occur, he praises the Divine goodness which has appointed wholesome remedies for the cure of these new wounds. He declares that the remedies for propitiating God are plainly taught in Scripture, and that by "works of righteousness" God is satisfied, and specially dwells on the

<sup>1</sup> *De Op. et. El.*, 2.

testimony of the angel Raphael to Tobit and Tobias, that prayer itself is made efficacious by almsgiving, and that by the same means life is delivered from peril and the soul from death.<sup>1</sup> To the same effect he writes in regard to the manner in which apostates may be restored to the Divine favour. After referring to the efficacy of what priests and martyrs may do for such offenders he exclaims, "Or if any one move Him still more by his own atonement, if he appease His anger, if he appease the wrath of an indignant God," he will be forgiven and rearmed and refreshed to resume the battle in which he has suffered defeat.<sup>2</sup>

Athanasius discussed the work of Christ only in a somewhat incidental manner, but he wrote in strong terms of the necessity of the Incarnation for the purpose of man's redemption, and his language on this subject has often been quoted to prove that he anticipated the assertion of Anselm, that the remission of punishment under any circumstances whatever would be incompatible with the nature and veracity of God. But this is evidently inaccurate because we have a distinct statement of his opinion, that if repentance would have undone the mischief caused by sin, God's acceptance of it would have been worthy of Himself. Writing against Arians he inquires, What ought God to do in relation to transgression? "Ought He simply to require from men repentance for their transgression? For this might be declared worthy of God; maintain-

<sup>1</sup> Tobit, xii. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> De Lapsis, 36.



ing, that as in consequence of transgression men had become corrupt, so in consequence of their repentance they should be restored to incorruption." He then proceeds to give reasons why, notwithstanding the righteous possibility of extending pardon to repentant sinners, God could not be satisfied with this facile mode of dealing with our race. Of these reasons the most pertinent to our present discussion is in substance that although repentance is a just ground of forgiveness it is not in itself an adequate remedy, partly because it does "not preserve intact the true and reasonable conception of God which belonged to man's unfallen state," and also because it could not recover men from the natural consequences of their transgression but only causes them to desist from their sins." To this he adds, "If, indeed, the fault had alone existed, and not corruption its consequence, repentance would have been admirable. But when once transgression had subjected men to the natural corruption which followed it, and men were thus deprived of that grace which attached to their first creation in God's image, what must then have happened, and what was needed for the recovery of this grace but the advent of the Logos of God? . . . For surely it was His part to restore the corrupt nature of man to incorruption, and to safely recover for mankind the true conception of their Father." <sup>1</sup>

Athanasius did not introduce the question, "How could repentance have been induced on a broad scale

<sup>1</sup> De Incarn. 7.

apart from Christ?" or he might have strengthened his case; but we are only concerned to ascertain his opinion on the equity of Divine forgiveness, and this is not left in any obscurity. It may be well, however, to show that the foregoing references to repentance were not casual utterances, but were based on a profound view of the truth that although God may righteously forgive the penitent, yet pardon alone is no remedy for man's mortal sickness. He saw that the process of sinning, repenting and obtaining forgiveness might continue to revolve in never-ending cycles, without effecting any progress, and that this would be inconsistent with the creative and redemptive purposes of God, and without any real profit to the world. Thus he wrote: "This had gone on without limit, and men had remained under guilt just as before, being in slavery to sin; and ever sinning, they had ever needed pardon, and never been made free, being in themselves carnal, and ever defeated by the Law by reason of the infirmity of the flesh."<sup>1</sup> Whether every utterance of Athanasius can be harmonised with these extracts may be disputable, but is quite unimportant. The essential fact is that he plainly asserted a principle which is the direct contradictory of that on which the Penal theory of Atonement is founded.<sup>2</sup>

Gregory Nazianzen agreed in the main with Athanasius, but was very explicit on some points of great interest. He scouted the idea that the ransom was given to the Evil One on the ground

<sup>1</sup> Orat. and Arian, ii. 68.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 3.

that, were this so, the robber would not only receive a payment from God, but that he would actually "receive God Himself." Dismissing this hideous thought, he went on to inquire whether the ransom was paid to the Father. Admitting that this was so, he anxiously guarded his meaning against two misunderstandings. He protests (1): that the ransom is not given to God as a being who is forcibly retaining us in His power, for He is not such a being; and (2) that it clearly is not accepted by God "because He Himself desired or needed it, but for the sake of conciliation and government, and because it was necessary to sanctify man through the humanity which God assumed."<sup>1</sup> These two points show that Gregory was a precursor of Grotius, and of all who now hold the governmental and ethical theories of Atonement and reject the Penal view.

Augustine boldly reverted to the idea that Christ's death was a ransom paid to the Devil. His conception of the Justice which was satisfied by that death is thus expressed: "It would have been injustice if the Devil had not had the right to rule over the being whom he had taken captive."<sup>2</sup> Confessing this, he declares that it was needful that the Devil should be overcome not by God's power but by His righteousness. "What then," he asks, "is the righteousness by which the Devil was conquered . . . and how was he conquered?" The answer is explicit. The Devil outwitted

<sup>1</sup> Orat. xlii. 48.

<sup>2</sup> De Libero Arbitrio iii. 10.

himself by slaying Jesus who had done nothing worthy of death and on whom he had no claim. By thus seizing and slaying what was not his own he forfeited his right to retain us. "And certainly it is just, that we whom he held as debtors should be dismissed free by believing in Him whom he slew without any debt. In this way it is that we are said to be justified in the blood of Christ. . . . The blood of Christ was given, as it were, as a price for us, by accepting which the Devil was not enriched, but bound: that we might be loosened from his bonds, and that he might not . . . deliver to the destruction of the second and eternal death any of those whom Christ, free from all debt, had redeemed by pouring out His own blood unindebtedly."<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere Augustine declared that men were foolish if they thought that the wisdom of God could not liberate men otherwise than by assuming our nature, and suffering at the hands of sinners.<sup>2</sup> In other respects Augustine's explanation of Christ's death was fundamentally at variance with the Penal theory, but enough has been said to exhibit his position.

From the close of the Pelagian controversy to the twelfth century, the Church passed through a period of intellectual sterility and moral decline. The supposed regeneration of infants by baptism inevitably produced a vast multitude of nominal Christians who had no spiritual experience. Whole

<sup>1</sup> De Trin. Bk. xiii. 13, 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> De Agone Christiano, 10.

populations were thus regenerated and made members of Christ before they could discern good and evil, and the great problem of the Church was not how to awaken saving faith in Christ, but how to deal with the post-baptismal sins of those who were numbered with His people. A second regeneration was unthinkable, yet baptism, though called the "Great Indulgence," could not be regarded as an indulgence to sin throughout life with impunity. In the attempt to deal with the difficulty thus created the doctrine of penance assumed an ever-increasing importance. This doctrine included the idea of satisfaction, *i.e.*, the Church by elaborate legislation guarded her dispensation of mercy to those who professed repentance, by imposing penalties, which had to be submitted to as a guarantee of sincere contrition, and of due submission to the authority of the Church. Apart from this "satisfaction," no absolution could be granted without a flagrant violation of the canon law. In the twelfth century this doctrine of satisfaction as an indispensable prerequisite of pardon was a ruling idea, and Anselm, instead of calling it in question, extracted from it his interpretation of the death of Christ. His merit is that he helped to direct men's thoughts to Christ; his demerit is that he transferred the ideas of the Roman Confessional to the work of Christ upon the cross.

Gregory the Great calls for mention only because he definitely, though quite incidentally, stated that Christ bore our punishment. He

affirmed that before Christ suffered, the Devil owned all men and owns all unbelievers now, but that Christ propitiated him, and bought off all believers in Himself. His view of the transaction was that Christ cheated the Devil. By way of illustration he represented the Devil as a fish, and God as an angler who baited His hook with Christ. The Devil snapped at the lure and seized Christ's flesh, but unwittingly swallowed the hidden hook of His Divinity. Inconsistently with this view, he casually speaks of Christ as propitiating God's wrath, but in this he regards Christ as our example, not our substitute, for, said he, we also propitiate God when we imitate Christ by enduring or working out penance. This penance he called "the baptism of tears," whereby post-baptismal sins are washed away. More than any other man Gregory deserves the credit or the blame of developing North African superstition into the Roman form. By Romanists, therefore, he is appropriately called "the Great," but he is not an ancestor of whom any Protestant should be proud.

✓ Anselm was the first to formulate the doctrine that the forgiveness of unpunished sin would be incompatible with the Divine justice. He scornfully repudiated Augustine's plea that the Devil had a just claim to possess the souls of fallen men. The Devil, he said, was a thief, and had no right to keep what he had contrived to steal from God. He also shrewdly revived the argument of Gregory Nazianzen that if Christ were a ransom paid to

Satan, this robber would not only be paid by God, but would actually receive *God Himself* as the price of giving up his plunder!

The theory which Anselm propounded starts with a definition of sin, viz., "To sin is nothing else but not to repay to God one's debt." What each rational creature owes to God is the subjection to Him of his "whole will." "Whoever renders not unto God this due honour takes away from God that which is His, and does God dishonour: and this is sin." The proof, or rather the assertion that this sin cannot justly be remitted is very summary. "To remit is but this: not to punish sin; and since the just treatment of unatoned sin is to punish it, if it be not punished it is unjustly forgiven." Hence, inasmuch as "it beseemeth not God to forgive anything in His realm illegally . . . therefore it beseemeth not God thus to forgive unpunished sin."<sup>1</sup>

Anselm's general argument is based on the *figment* that God determined to save a certain number of men to take the place of fallen angels. Because of this, he tells us, God was obliged to find a means of satisfying his own honour. Man could not repay his own debt because, even a complete obedience, if it could be achieved by one who has ever sinned, would not repay the debts of the past.

Having thus reduced the whole problem of salvation to a question of debt and payment, Anselm presents the dilemma that although man cannot pay his own debt, it must be paid by man, since "other-

<sup>1</sup> *Cur Deus Homo?* Bk. i. 11, 12

wise man does not make amends," and thus introduces his solution of the question "Why was God made Man?" "If, then, it be necessary (as we have ascertained) that the celestial citizenship is to be completed from among men, and that this cannot be unless there be made that before-mentioned satisfaction, which God only can, and man only should, make, it is needful that it should be made by one who is both God and man."<sup>1</sup>

In explaining the manner in which the perfect obedience and undeserved death of Christ avails for the remission of sin, Anselm perseveres in the use of commercial terms. He affirms that the life of Christ was so precious that its yielding up to death outweighed the sins of all men, and thus sufficed to atone for the sins of the whole world, and "infinitely more." Hence by dying Christ paid to God more than man owed. Thus a new debtor and creditor account was opened between the Son and the Father, according to which the Father, having been overpaid, owed a great debt to the Son, which justice required Him to refund. But there was no way in which God could repay His Son, wherefore it became necessary that it "should be repaid to someone else" to whom the Son should will to give it. "To whom," then, reasons Anselm, "could He more fitly assign the fruit of, and retribution for, His death than those for whose salvation He made Himself man, and to whom He in dying gave the example of dying for righteousness' sake? . . . Or

<sup>1</sup> *Cur Deus Homo?* Bk. ii. 6.



whom could He more justly make heirs of a debt due to Him of which He Himself had no need?"<sup>1</sup>

Anselm's radical principle that the forgiveness of unpunished sin would be unjust was not generally accepted by the Roman Church, but it was endorsed in the sixteenth century by the foremost leaders of the Protestant Revolution. Its terms were variously modified, and its proportional measurement of values was made less prominent, but the chief alteration was one of addition or supplement. In Anselm's theory, faith as the subjective condition or means of appropriating the benefits of Christ's death was scarcely taken into account.<sup>2</sup> It left Romanists free to say that in baptism the great debt which Christ paid is cancelled once for all, but that post-baptismal sin creates a new debt, for which new and supplementary satisfactions must be made. Thus Anselm left the Roman system of discipline unsmitten, and during the centuries which followed, it became more and more corrupt, until at last the evil culminated in an unblushing sale of pardons in which the "satisfaction" rendered was frankly commercial, and consisted solely in a money payment. This insolent defiance of common sense and conscience provoked the Protestant Revolution. When Luther nailed his theses to the church door he was still a Papist, and simply stormed against a scandalous abuse; but when he affirmed the

<sup>1</sup> (Bk. ii. 14, 19.) For a criticism of Anselm's attempt to defend his system against the objection that inasmuch as forgiveness is a Christian duty it cannot be unrighteous in God, see p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 4.

absolute necessity of personal faith and the worthlessness of penance for the satisfaction of God, he raised an issue which divided Christendom into two camps, and originated new discussions which are not yet closed. Seldom has the human intellect been employed with so much strenuousness or with so much subtlety and skill as in the conflict which ensued ; but that conflict lies outside the scope of this review. My object in giving a brief sketch of salient facts has been to trace the slow and suspicious course of development by which the idea was reached, that the forgiveness of unpunished sin is unrighteous, and therefore impossible to God. No conclusive inference can be deduced from these facts. But when a dogma is presented as a first principle of Christianity, and is affirmed to be a plain and explicit doctrine of Scripture, if not an absolutely self-evident truth, the fact that it was first articulated by a schoolman of the twelfth century is at least a presumptive argument against its claims.

## LECTURE II

### FIRST PRINCIPLES

FOR reasons previously assigned I shall not emphasise what is familiarly known as "the moral argument" against the Penal Theory. Intrinsically, ethical considerations are of primary importance, and, historically, they have done a great work in enforcing a more critical study of the central doctrine of Christianity. But if it can be shown that the theory in question is not entitled to be called "*the doctrine of Atonement*" because not taught in Scripture, it will necessarily follow that ethical objections have become superfluous and even irrelevant because directed against no real objective in the Christian religion. It is only as a supposed doctrine of Scripture that the theory has any serious claim to the attention of mankind, and should investigation prove that it is not a Christian idea but an ecclesiastical counterfeit, ethical objections would be relegated to an already crowded museum of obsolete weapons.

Four reasons will be adduced for rejecting the Penal Theory, of which the first is negative in form, viz. :

1. That its basal principle is not taught in any of

the supposed "proof texts" which are quoted in its support, *i.e.* that in none of these passages of Scripture is it stated or implied that the Divine Nature demands for its satisfaction the punishment of sin.

Before embarking on a discussion of this principle it is necessary to define what is meant by the word punishment, which is so variously understood that rival definitions might almost be described as the trade-marks of opposing schools of theology. I am not anxious to contend for the rightness or wrongness of any definition, as such, but only to clear the discussion of great thoughts from a profitless dispute about words, and from the many evils which arise from the use of equivocal terms.

The word punishment as employed by all parties must necessarily include the idea of suffering imposed by authority on wrongdoers, but it is used in radically different senses in regard to the feelings and designs with which it is inflicted. Some regard all Divine punishments as originating in the love of God and intended to reform offenders. Others view them as vindicatory, and intended to guard the sanctity of law and enforce respect for authority. Others say that they originate in God's anger, and are meant to express His antagonism to sin and to sinners. According to this last view punishment is radically different from chastisement, which is the remedial discipline imposed by paternal love. The essential difference thus commonly insisted upon is, therefore, discoverable only in the

mind of the being who imposes suffering, because in outward form punishments and chastisements may be identical, and indeed the same visitation falling upon a large community or upon a family may be, according to this view, an angry punishment to some and a loving chastisement to others. This, of course, opens up a terrible possibility of misunderstanding and is unspeakably serious, because the moral effect upon the sufferer confessedly depends upon his estimate of God's motive. When suffering is endured as a proof of God's anger and hostility it hardens and aggravates, but when borne as the chastening of love it subdues and purifies. It is inconceivable to many minds that God can ever smite the guilty without a holy desire for their amendment, but consistent advocates of the Penal Theory not only admit, but insist that He does thus punish the wicked without any remedial purpose, and that it is punishment of this non-remedial character which is demanded by His nature and authority as God, and was actually endured by Christ on the cross.

In discussing this theory we can avoid incessant circumlocution only by using the chief term in the narrower sense affixed to it by advocates of the Penal Theory. This use of the term must not be construed as an admission that God ever does, or that earthly parents, or civil rulers ever should punish, without a desire to benefit the sufferer, if possible, as well as to sustain authority and guard the sanctity of law. I consent thus to employ the term partly for the

avoidance of a profitless verbal dispute, but mainly because it would be difficult to find acceptance for any other term, to represent the idea we have to consider. With this preliminary explanation we may now proceed to examine the testimony of Scripture which has been adduced in support of the principle recited above.

The passage which is regarded as most fundamental and; unanswerable occurs in the story of man's probation in the garden of Eden. "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17). Those who found a theological doctrine on these words are bound to read them as an exact translation of what God said to Adam; but I have only to urge that whether the narrative should be regarded as history, parable, or myth, it does not teach the inexorable necessity of punishment. The one clear fact about which no dispute can be raised is that it is presented as an account of the earliest phase of man's moral experience. Either by slow development, or by a sudden creation, man arrived at an hour in which he became conscious of an obligation to obey a Supreme Being, and by some means apprehended the fact that disobedience might be fatal to his life.

Taking the words ascribed to God just as they stand, I submit that we have no right to regard them as the fulmination of a threat. They were ostensibly addressed to innocent persons,

who had as yet shown no disposition to rebel, and should be read as a kindly and gracious warning that death would be the consequence of sin. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou wilt surely die" is a fair translation, and it changes the tone from that of an austere and threatening master to that of a wise father giving counsel to inexperienced children. This interpretation is not indispensable to my argument and need not be urgently pressed. Whether read as a warning or as a threat, the passage undoubtedly connects death with sin, but quite as certainly it contains no declaration which would be violated by an act of forgiveness after sin had been committed. Prior to any transgression, no reference to a contingent pardon would have been utterable. No human law contains a clause proclaiming pardon to anticipated transgressors, yet the Royal prerogative of mercy remains, and a free pardon is never held to be a sign of the King's untruthfulness. God was not untruthful when He said to David by Nathan, "thou shalt not die," though the law indisputably said that the adulterer and the murderer should surely be put to death. God was not untruthful when He spared repentant Nineveh, though He had said by Jonah "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed." By the same canon of common sense we must conclude that God did not falsify His ancient word to man when He sent His prophets to preach repentance and to assure the contrite of forgiveness.

The justice of this contention is more than

vindicated by the remarkable way in which the warning is repeated by Ezekiel, and is closely linked with a promise of pardon. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," writes the prophet (xviii. 21), and torn from its context this proclamation, like its original in Genesis, is incessantly quoted as if it shut out the possibility of remission, and bound God, not only by His justice but by His veracity, never to forego the punishment of a single sin. But the assumption that we have here an irrevocable sentence of death upon all transgressors is instantly reprov'd and set aside by the next verse, which reads: "But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." Scanning the context we find that these verses form part of a great prophetic oracle to declare that all God's threats or warnings of punishment, and all His promises of blessing, are conditional, and may be reversed in accordance with a righteous principle which is here proclaimed. The theme of the chapter is not the inexorable severity of God, but the righteousness of God in dealing with men according to their ways; punishing the wicked who persist in their iniquities, but pardoning those who repent, and punishing no man except for his own individual transgressions. The object of Ezekiel was to denounce a false charge against God which was sapping the foundation of faith and morality in Israel, viz., that He punished men for the sins of their forefathers.



“The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge,” said the grumblers in Babylon. “The ways of the Lord are not equal,” they complained, and to this the prophet answered in God’s name, “Are not My ways equal, are not yours unequal? Therefore I will judge you O house of Israel, every man according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves and live.”

Other passages relied upon to prove the truth of what Ezekiel thus trenchantly denies are Rom. v. 12, vi. 23, I. Cor. xv. 21, 22, James i. 15. But on examination it will be found that these verses simply repeat in a retrospective sense the fact prospectively announced in Gen. ii. 17, viz.: that death is the outcome and wages of sin. They neither affirm nor deny any doctrine of forgiveness, but they leave ample scope for the higher, but perfectly harmonious truth, that “the gift of God is eternal life.”<sup>1</sup>

Another group of supposed “proof-texts” will be found to have even less bearing on the question before us. In Psal. v. 4, 5, the writer comforts himself with an assurance that God abhors wickedness, and will not tolerate it in His presence. This is a conviction which every ethical Theist must approve, but it throws no light on the subject of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 5.

forgiveness. Prov. xvii. 15 strongly asserts God's detestation of injustice. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous. Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord." This proverb might be tortured into an execration of the Pauline doctrine that God Himself "justifieth the ungodly," but obviously the justification of the wicked here denounced is a corrupt screening of criminals by shameless judges, and has no resemblance to the forgiveness of the contrite. Heb. vi. 4-8, deals exclusively with the case of those who sin wilfully after tasting the "heavenly gift," and being "made partakers of the Holy Ghost." Its import is that such men are in a more hopeless position than that of unconverted sinners. The thing denied is the possibility of renewing them *again* unto *repentance*, not the possibility of forgiveness if repentance were induced by a fresh preaching of the Gospel. Even this portentous utterance leaves room for Christ's radiant word, "With God nothing is impossible"; and it plainly implies that if such obdurate offenders against grace could be subdued to repent, God would again forgive even as He had formerly forgiven. Heb. xii. 29 is totally irrelevant, and the same must be said of Rom. iii. 5. II. Thess. i. 6-8, declares that God will not fail to ultimately judge the wicked, and specially refers to those persecutors of the saints, who seem at times to war against goodness with impunity. It also agrees with many other Scriptures, and with the intuitions

of all pure hearts in teaching that no sin is so atrocious as that which wars against the grace, which brings salvation to man's door. All this is, of course, a truism to every Christian mind.

One other group of passages remains for notice, viz., Gal. iii. 13; Rom. viii. 3; I. Peter ii. 24; II. Cor. v. 21; Heb. ix. 28. All these are cited to prove that Christ actually bore the punishment of man's sin, and therefore as teaching implicitly, if not explicitly, that it was necessary to man's salvation for this punishment to be endured.

The question thus raised is twofold. We have to inquire (1) whether any of these texts actually affirm that Christ bore the penalty of sin; and, if so (2), whether the inference drawn from the fact is valid. Of these two questions the first is obviously crucial, and if answered in the negative it becomes final and decisive. We have no interest in the validity of an inference from imaginary facts, and the second question will require no discussion if we find that none of the texts cited assert the penal nature of Christ's sufferings.

A careful reading of Gal. iii. 1-14, must convince even prejudiced minds that the passage contains no reference to any punishment imposed on Christ. Paul's object was to exhibit the natural impossibility of salvation by law. Hence he points out that the Jewish law laid its ban on all who lived under it, because no man had ever been able to work out all the righteousness it enjoined. On this account, therefore, he points out that the law was incapable

of fulfilling the promise to Abraham that through his seed all nations should become partakers of his blessing. This blessing of Abraham was the acceptance of his faith for righteousness, and Christ had come to awaken similar faith throughout all nations and so to fulfil God's promise. The glad tidings sent by Him unto the world was that the God of Abraham was ready to deal with all men as He dealt with the ancient patriarch. To prepare this Gospel, and to set it forth as the outcome of God's righteousness and not merely of His tenderness and pity, Christ came, and lived, and taught, and finally surrendered Himself to be cast out and crucified as a malefactor. Thus in the language of the Deuteronomist He "became" a curse for us (*ὑπέρ* not *ἀντὶ ἡμῶν*) that we through Him might obtain blessing. The significance of this phrase is illustrated by Mark who finds a fulfilment of Isa. liii. 12 in the fact that Jesus was crucified between two thieves and was thus "numbered with" or "accounted among" the transgressors (xv. 28, A.V.). This comment, whenever made, was evidently based on Christ's own words, "That which is written must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was reckoned with transgressors,'" (Luke xxii. 37) and in this saying Christ was manifestly preparing his disciples for the shock of finding their holy and revered teacher cast out and crucified by men as an evil-doer. There is no suggestion in any of these kindred sayings of any punishment being laid on Christ by the Father. The point in each case lies in the affecting truth, that for

the sake of our redemption Christ endured the shameful death of the cross. This is a fact which myriads who reject, and millions who never heard of the Penal theory, have rejoiced in from the day of Pentecost until now. It is perfectly consistent with any theory of Atonement which finds a redemptive value in the death of Christ, and advocates of the Penal theory have no right to claim it as an enunciation of their views.

Rom. viii. 3 must also be set aside as a "proof text" because it makes no mention of punishment. Paul is here engaged in the task of defending the righteousness of his doctrine that there is "now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." This doctrine had been denounced as immoral, and he repels this charge by exhibiting the ethical effects of deliverance from legal bondage. It would be premature to discuss his entire argument, but the point made in this place is very simple and obvious. The law could command duty, but it could not inspire or enable obedience, and "what the law could not do," viz., set us free from the dominion of sin and death, God had achieved by "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on account of sin" (*περὶ ἁμαρτίας*). By this means God had "condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness (*δικαίωμα*) of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit."<sup>1</sup>

The passage declares that Christ was sent into the world to deal with sin, to condemn sin, and to

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 6.

infuse into all who through faith are grafted into Him a new spirit of life. But condemnation and punishment are totally different things. The one is universally necessary and cannot conceivably be dispensed with, but the other may be, and often is, remitted with beneficial effect, as every parent knows. They are so different that the condemnation of sin is an essential condition and pre-requisite of forgiveness, and only those who are brought by Divine teaching and discipline to condemn themselves can be pardoned without being morally corrupted, as Paul explains in I. Cor. xi. 28-34. Condemnation, it may be added, is not only a pre-requisite of forgiveness, but is actually implied, and inevitably contained in the very act of forgiveness itself, for this act has no relation to what is blameless.

The distinction between these two things which are so often confounded was vividly illustrated some years ago in the trial of certain sailors, who had been parties to the death of a comrade when on the verge of starvation at sea. Their vessel had been wrecked, and the few survivors drifted on the ocean in an open boat for many days. When their scanty provisions had been exhausted and all were at the point of death, they agreed that it would be better for one to die than for all to perish. Each man offered to be the victim, but none would consent to accept such a sacrifice unless all agreed to cast lots and take an equal risk. The lot fell on a youth who seemed already to be past recovery. They all kissed him and prayed, and then he willingly died and

became their sustenance. On landing the survivors went at once to a police station, and, instead of hiding their deed, surrendered to take their trial. The whole country was profoundly stirred, and millions thought that they ought to be acquitted. But the Judge who tried them pointed out to the jury that there must be no blinking of the fact that murder on the high seas had been committed, and he unfalteringly declared that in the interests of all travellers by sea such an act must be condemned by the court. Judge, jury, barristers and spectators were painfully moved, but the verdict was delivered and sentence passed. There was probably not a man in England who thought the men should be punished, and the whole nation rejoiced when the Queen gave them a free pardon. They had sinned, and it was indispensably necessary that their sin should be solemnly condemned. A verdict of "not guilty" or a connivance at their escape would have justified their action, but when the act had been condemned, a Royal pardon, which also contained in itself a condemnation of wrong, might be safely given, and punishment would have violated the moral sense of all good men.

No human analogy can ever be perfect in all its particulars, but this at least makes clear the radical difference between condemnation and punishment. It helps us to see, therefore, that God's condemnation of sin must be made clear to the universe. A wholesale distribution of forgiveness would becloud man's moral judgments and

bring the Divine authority into contempt. The cross of Christ is the measure not only of God's love for men, but also of His hatred of iniquity, and all who enter into living fellowship with Christ enter into His mind; and are imbued with His Spirit. As Paul wrote elsewhere, such believers are "crucified with Christ," they are "baptised into His death," they "have died to sin," and are raised again into newness of life. "Therefore there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," not because they are faultless, but because spiritually they are at one with Christ alike in His condemnation of sin, and in His devotion to the Will of God. If Paul had wished to say "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" because He has borne the punishment of their sins, he had no lack of courage for such an utterance, but he did not say it, and we are wiser to take his own words as they stand than to strain them into agreement with opinions of our own.

In I. Peter ii. 18-24 the apostle is admonishing Christian servants to patiently endure the injustice of evil masters and thus imitate the example of Christ, "because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow in His steps." With exquisite beauty he displays the truth, that the sinless Christ suffered wrongfully as an evil doer, not only as an example but on our behalf (*ὕπὲρ*). It was the sin of the world which laid the cross on Him, and it was the burden of this sin



which oppressed and afflicted Him. It was emphatically our *sin, not our punishment*, which bowed His soul in Gethsemane, and ruptured His surcharged heart at Calvary. The sufferings of Christ are thus traced to man's iniquity, not to Divine anger; to man's injustice, not to God's justice. Peter makes this clear by reminding his readers that in the hour of darkness our Lord appealed from man's misjudgment to God's equity, and "committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." These expressions and ideas, and the entire drift of this appeal for Christlikeness are utterly incompatible with the supposition that Christ was bearing our punishment. Had He been suffering penally, His death on the cross would have been no example for maltreated disciples; and there could have been no appeal from the verdict of those who numbered Him with transgressors, to the righteous judgment of Him who cannot err.

Before leaving this passage I should like to express my sympathy with those who have been taught from early childhood to regard the language which declares that Christ suffered for us, and that He "bare our sins," as meaning that He bore our punishment. Lessons of this kind are associated with some of our tenderest memories and purest feelings, and appear too sacred for criticism and too near the roots of religious faith to be loosened without danger of destruction to the heavenly plant. There is a natural fear of accepting any other interpretation of such words lest it should

attenuate their spiritual power. But there need be no such misgivings in this instance. When the idea of punishment has been eliminated from these expressions their true power and beauty are enhanced. It may help some to discern and appreciate their significance if they will compare the words of Peter with those of Paul in Phil. i. 29, 30, where exactly the same terms are used to teach that it is our privilege to suffer for Christ. Writing from his Roman prison to incite his friends to endure persecution without fear or flinching, Paul goes a little farther than Peter by saying, "Because to you it hath been granted on behalf of Christ (*ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ*) not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in His behalf" (*ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ πάσχειν*). Thus Paul makes the Christian's undeserved sufferings to be not only an imitation of their Lord, but in a humble way a reciprocation of His sacrificial service. Such a thought as this either absolutely excludes the idea of penal sufferings being borne by Christ for us, or else it teaches that Christians bear some punishment that was due to Christ!

In II. Cor. v. 21 Paul uses an expression which has caused not a little perplexity, and can only be explained as a vivid paradox. "Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." The Adoptionists took these words in their most literal sense, and founded upon them the doctrine of Christ's actual sinfulness. In recent times the same view has been maintained in Germany, and

was at least attributed to Edward Irving ; but such a monstrous interpretation is forbidden by the words "who knew no sin" as well as by the spotless beauty of Christ's character as portrayed in the Gospels. Avoiding this intolerable literalness of exposition advocates of the Penal theory read the words "made sin on our behalf" as equivalent to "was made to bear the penalty of sin," or "had our sin imputed to Him." But there is no excuse for such maltreatment of language. Once again it must be insisted that, if Paul had wished to convey such a meaning, he was quite as capable of expressing it as any mediæval or modern theologian ; and the fact that he did not say anything about imputed guilt or a penal infliction is ample proof that such ideas were not in his mind. The entire passage (cap. v. 11 ; vi. 2) is a sustained effort to bring the love of God in Christ to bear upon the hearts and lives of the Corinthians. Paul traces all that Christ did and suffered to the grace of God, who "was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself ; not imputing unto them their trespasses" ; but he does not say "imputing their trespasses to Christ," nor could he have said this without teaching the absurd contradiction that God imputed these trespasses to Himself, because He was actually "in Christ." Throughout, Paul has in view the constraining and renewing power of the love of God in Christ ; and having magnified and displayed the wondrous manner of this love, he beseeches his readers not to receive such grace in vain. To reconcile us to God and

bring us into conformity with the Will of God, Christ died for us, and died the death of a common malefactor on the cross. He, the sinless One, was thus made sin on our behalf (*ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*), and the object of this subjection of Christ to an ignominious death was the destruction of sin in our nature, "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." There is no hint of such an exchange as we are asked to discover. It is not said that our sin is imputed to Christ and His righteousness imputed to us. Such a nominal transfer of merit and demerit is absolutely foreign to the Apostle's plea. The object of Christ was to draw us into vital union with Himself, that so we might not merely be accounted, but truly "become the righteousness of God in Him."

It would be impossible to adequately expound Heb. ix 28 without a prolonged inquiry into the real meaning and worth of the Levitical sacrifices, and such an investigation would be premature in this place. But without pretending to unfold all, or nearly all, that the passage does mean, we may satisfy ourselves that it does not teach that Christ bore the punishment of sin. In proof of this it should be sufficient to repeat the remark already made in regard to other texts of the same group, viz. : that there is not a word here about punishment, nor is there any allusion to a Divine anger which needs to be appeased, to a Divine justice which demands the execution of a sentence, or to any change effected in the mind of God. If the necessity of punishment had been in the author's

mind he could not have failed to proclaim it here in explicit terms, and his silence prohibits the imputation of such a doctrine. It is distinctly said that Christ was manifested "at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." It is also said that He was "once offered to bear the sins of many," and these sayings declare a great fact which all who believe in any theory of Atonement whatever rejoice in as the foundation of their hopes and the inspiration of eternal thanksgiving and praise. But, as already shown, the bearing of sin is not the same thing as the bearing of punishment. Matthew supplies an illustrative exposition of the manner in which all human ills were borne by Christ. Having related how diseased, insane, and demon-haunted people were brought to Christ, the evangelist states that Jesus cast out the unclean spirits and healed all the sick; and then, recalling the language of Isa. liii. he declares that in this way Jesus fulfilled the ancient prediction, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases" (viii. 17). Our Lord was not infected by our leprosy or fever, He was not the victim of demons, nor was He crippled or insane. He took into His heart the burden of all the sorrows and calamities, and all the shame and guilt of those around, and carried this awful load until at last the heart of flesh was rent with anguish on the cross. By thus bearing our sins and carrying our sorrows He has prevailed to cast out Satan, and cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

Carefully reading Heb. ix. x. we cannot fail to see that the writer's great thought is that the sacrifice of Christ differs from all others in this, that it has power to cleanse the conscience—to reconcile men to God by putting His laws into their hearts, and writing them upon their minds: *i.e.*, Christ is able to put away sin by inspiring love for God and delight in His good and acceptable and perfect will. The ancient sacrifices had no such power or tendency, and therefore they could never put away sin. They were a confessional remembrance of sin, without which man could not approach the Mercy Seat, but they left the offerer a sinner still, and needed repetition as long as he lived. But Christ creates a new man in the heart, and what He has once done avails eternally, because such a sacrifice as His can never lose its power.

Another great thought in the writer's mind is that the blood of Christ is the solemn and inviolable seal of a new covenant. When Moses set the Divine law before the people at Sinai, they deliberately undertook to obey all God's commandments as the condition of their existence as a nation; and in solemn ratification of this compact animals were slain and blood was sprinkled upon the altar and upon the people (Exod. xxiv.). In the covenant thus made and sealed there was not a syllable about forgiveness. Subsequently provision was made for offerings on account of sins committed in ignorance, though never for wilful

transgressions. But the covenant itself contained no hint that transgressions could be forgiven. The blood which sealed it spoke of judgment and death, not pardon and life. To this terrible fact Jesus significantly pointed when giving the cup to His disciples. He was making and sealing a new covenant, which, in vivid and blessed contrast to the first, contained a pledge of God's forgiveness to all who accepted its conditions. Therefore, said He, "this is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins." (Mat. xxvi. 28.) These words appear to have been in the mind of the writer to the Hebrews, and he links the thought of remission with the thought of a new covenant such as Jeremiah had foretold (Jer. xxxi. 33), in which God promised to put His law into human hearts and minds, instead of in a book or upon stones. Remission of sins unaccompanied with cleansing and regenerative energies, and without issuing in conformity to God's will, would be a curse to mankind. But it is equally true that a renewal of mind and transformation of life, unaccompanied with the remission of former sins and the assurance of all needed mercy in the future, would be an aggravation of human wretchedness. Such a transformation would produce a creature filled with holy aspirations and right purposes, and with a quickened conscience, yet would leave him to endure for ever the punishment of the sins he had learned to abandon and abhor. Thus renewal of mind and remission

of sins can never be righteously divorced ; and the sacrifice of Christ was commended to the Hebrews as the instrument and pledge of this dual grace of salvation, this perfect cleansing from the guilt and power of sin.

Reviewing our examination of the passages usually cited as proofs that Christ actually endured the punishment of human sin, it must be claimed that no such proof is discoverable in any of them. The utmost concession which can be made is that some might be found not irreconcilable with the Penal theory if this could be established on other grounds. This admission may be freely made, but it has no effect upon the argument, because the same passages are equally consistent with any other theory which recognises that Christ truly lived and died on our behalf and on account of sin ; while against any hypothetical advantage to be given away by the admission, there must be arrayed the fatal fact that some of the passages have been found not merely neutral, but diametrically opposed to the idea that the sufferings of Christ were penal. ✓

In view of these conclusions it would be idle to discuss the inference drawn from an unwarrantable interpretation of the texts as a whole. During the period which elapsed between the publication of "*Cur Deus Homo?*" and the Reformation many great schoolmen, including Bonaventura, Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, agreed with Anselm as to the alleged fact that Christ did bear our punishment, but re-



puddiated as inconsequential the inference that God could not have justly pardoned men without this "satisfaction." Their reasons were cogent and were generally convincing to the thinkers of their age, but we have no occasion to revive, or even to review, this academic controversy. It will be enough to add, that whatever God has done for our salvation must claim our reverence as the best of all possible methods which His Divine Wisdom could select; but the fact that He selected it is no adequate evidence that His moral nature left Him no righteous alternative.

The foregoing argument might reasonably be pressed as conclusive, because it is inconceivable that an essential principle of Christianity could have escaped some clear and unmistakable Scriptural presentation; but we are not limited to a merely negative plea and may now advance the positive proposition:—

2. That the dogma under criticism is a flagrant contradiction of explicit declarations of the Divine character and ways, which abound in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The most fundamental disclosure of God's nature, and specifically of His nature and ways as related to sinful men, is contained in the proclamation of His Name recorded in *Exod. xxxiv. 6-7*. Here, if anywhere in Scripture, we have a sublime revelation of what God is in Himself and of His manner of dealing with sinners. If it were true that His nature

demands the punishment of all transgressions, this fact must have been made unmistakably clear in the disclosure of His nature vouchsafed to Moses in connection with his Divine legation. Yet, instead of such a proclamation as Anselm could approve, we have a glorious intimation that the God of Sinai desires to be known among men as "The Lord, the Lord a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*." The words in italics are of course inserted by the translators as requisite in English to render the abrupt Hebrew intelligible, and I do not think that a more felicitous rendering could be found. The clause thus completed brings the doctrine of the entire passage into strict harmony with that which we have found in Ezek. xviii. It warns us that God's mercy is not moral indifference or judicial laxity; that men who do not turn from their sin will remain under condemnation, and that for such guilty ones there can be no absolution. Some religionists of feeble moral fibre may shrink from this clause as too severe, but without it the Name of God would be defective. It does not weaken the force of the preceding words, and is a most necessary, equitable, and, rightly viewed, a most merciful caution to those who might be tempted to drink the assurance of God's mercy as a moral opiate.

It is highly significant that the graciousness of God and His readiness to pass by transgressions

stand first in this proclamation, and that laxity is denied in an addendum to avert a possible misunderstanding. Had the order been reversed, so that retributive justice stood first and bulked more largely in the oracle, followed by a brief clause about mercy to the contrite, the effect would have been different, though the truth might have been the same. But the order chosen clearly shows that Mercy is proclaimed to be a fundamental quality of the Divine Nature, and not a mere attenuation of His justice. Nothing more impressive could be imagined than this vision as an answer to the prayer of Moses, to see God's glory, immediately after that hour of despair in which he had shattered the first tablets of the law, and just before he received a rescript of the great commandments. The law said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and this vision revealed Him as a God whom even sinful men might love. Clouds and great darkness enveloped the hill to which Moses retired for converse with the Unseen deliverer from Egypt; and from the darkness came thunderings and lightnings, which filled the ranks of Israel with fear. Yet out of this awful gloom Moses emerged with radiant face and joyful heart, because he had found the secret of the Lord, as a God whose essential nature is not austerity but graciousness, not implacability but mercifulness.

This interpretation of the great proclamation is confirmed by the use made of the Name thus disclosed in other parts of Scripture. In the vivid narrative preserved in Num. xiv. we are told that

when the Lord threatened to disinherit the people because they refused to enter the Promised Land, Moses pleaded that they might be spared, and urged this prayer with pathetic earnestness on the ground that it would be consonant with God's nature as revealed in His name. The underlying thought of this plea is that forgiveness is greater and more difficult than implacability ; and on this account an appeal is made to the Divine magnanimity, and its failure under provocation is deprecated as weakness. "*Let the power of the Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, 'The Lord is slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and that will by no means clear the guilty.' . . . Pardon I pray Thee the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt until now.*"

This prayer for mercy, in the faith that it is God's eternal nature and glory to forgive, is the keynote to all the sweetest songs of Israel. Throughout the Psalms and Prophets pardon is sued for, and every kind of blessing besought for God's name's sake. There is not a single example in the Old Testament of a prayer based on any trust in the efficacy of sacrifices to take away sin, nor is there the least trace of a suspicion that the pardon of unpunished sin would be unrighteous. This is often regarded as a proof that the prophetic spirit and the devotional heart rose superior to every priestly system, and despised the ceremonial law as a

perversion of religion. It will be shown hereafter that this is a mistake, and that the letter and spirit of the ritual institutes, as contained in codes of different dates, are in strict agreement with the teachings of the prophets and with the songs of Hebrew saints. It is enough here to affirm that in the highest and holiest minds veneration for Divine law was sweetly blended with faith in Divine mercy, and that all who longed for God's salvation sought His throne in a spirit of faith and hope, which found a warrant in the revelation of His Name, which, according to their Scriptures, had accompanied the publication of His Law.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine contained in Ezekiel xxxiii. is exactly the same as in the earlier chapter, and some of the expressions are the same, but others are cast in a still more startling form. The prophet's emphatic and unqualified doctrine is that the Divine warning (or threat) of death as the penalty of sin is always conditional, and must be so understood, even when no condition is expressed, and no possible alternative is foreshadowed. No sentence could well be stronger, or, when spoken to a wicked man, more final and irrevocable, than the four words, "Thou shalt surely die."<sup>2</sup> These are the very words which were spoken as a

<sup>1</sup> For illustrative instances of faith in God's name, *cf.* II. Chron. xxx. 9; Neh. ix. 17; Psalm xxv. 11; xxii. 5; lxxix. 8, 9; lxxxvi. 5, 15; xcix. 8; ciii. 8-12; cxvi. 4, 5; cxxx. 4; cxlv. 7-9; Isa. xlviii. 9-11; Jer. xiv. 7, 21; Ezek. xxxvi. 21-29; Dan. ix. 9; Joel ii. 11-14, 32. Also Rom. x. 13; Acts ii. 21, applying Joel's words to the conditions of the Christian era.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 7.

warning to Adam, and are constantly cited as the death-knell of the race, because a decree which God is for ever bound by His veracity to execute. But the prophet had to fight the sullen despair of men who masked their impenitence by a plea of hopelessness, saying, "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them: how then should we live?" And to them he was inspired to affirm that God had never uttered a decree by which His tender mercies were foreclosed. "When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him; he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live."

It is extraordinary that in the face of this sunlight revelation of God's principle of moral government, theologians, whose chief boast is that they are Biblical, should have the courage to say that the justice and veracity of God forbid Him in any case to remit the penalty of death! It is stranger still that they should dissect a few words out of a living body of truth, like the oracles in Ezek. xviii. and xxxiii., and should offer these mangled fragments in their dead literalism as authoritative proof of a doctrine which the prophet was labouring to refute!

The evidence thus adduced from the Old Testament might be indefinitely increased, but it would be useless to pile up proofs of a proposition which

has already been demonstrated. We may therefore pass to the teachings of the Master Himself, and in doing so I submit as a third proposition :—

(3) That the dogma under review is incompatible with the Life and Teachings of Christ.

If we believe the recorded witness of Christ concerning Himself, we must believe that He did nothing of Himself, but always did "in like manner what He saw the Father doing" (John v. 19). We must also believe that the Father was in Christ, so truly that in seeing Christ we see the Father, and in knowing Christ's character we know the Father (John xiv. 9, 10, &c.).

This thought is most significantly developed in the prologue to the fourth Gospel, where John beautifully identifies the revelation of God in Christ with the declaration of His Name to Moses which proceeded from the cloud of glory. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth" (John i. 14). In accordance with this view it will be found that everything Christ is recorded to have said and done corresponds to the meaning of the ancient name of the Lord which has already been pondered. This consideration makes it the more certain that Christ's treatment of sinners and His directions to His disciples in regard to the duty of forgiveness must be accepted by all who believe the Gospels as an exposition of God's thoughts and ways.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 8.

To all who appreciate this principle it is profoundly significant that Christ elevated forgiveness into a primary moral duty. His law of forgiveness has been variously misunderstood and sadly ill-observed ; but no one has questioned the fact that He requires his disciples to forgive one another freely, nor would it be possible to exaggerate the stringency with which the command is enforced. We are to forgive men their offences against ourselves as often as they say "I repent." We are forbidden to go behind these words to judge the speaker's sincerity, and are to accept the verbal profession if offered even 490 times in a single day, and this "seventy times seven" evidently imports that there is to be no arithmetical limit to the words "as often." So insistent is Christ that mercy shall never be refused to one who does repent, that He thus prefers to let any number of false pretences pass unscrutinised by man rather than have one contrite soul offended through unjust suspicion. God alone can read the heart, and He alone reserves the right to go behind men's words. The disciple's duty is enforced by the most awful of all possible sanctions. "If ye forgive not. . . neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you." Thus, according to Christ, a refusal to grant forgiveness to them that seek it ranks with the sin against the Holy Spirit as a thing which God will in no wise forgive. In His model prayer He bids us imprecate vengeance on ourselves if we venture to approach the Throne of Grace with merciless hearts to sue for mercy, saying,



"Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."<sup>1</sup>

The parable of the unmerciful servant not only illustrates this law, but intimates that a refusal to forgive, when the moral conditions are present, will cause God to cancel a forgiveness which has already been pronounced.

But while the human duty is too plainly taught to be denied, efforts have been made to set aside the inference that what is so solemnly enjoined on man cannot possibly be otherwise than right in God. In this connection it is interesting to note that Anselm congratulated himself on having disposed of this argument. He makes his imaginary inquirer say, "It appears to be a contradiction that He should enjoin that upon us which beseemeth not Himself."<sup>2</sup> To this Anselm replies, "There is no contradiction in this injunction; for we may not appropriate what belongs to God alone; now it appertains to no one to take vengeance, save to Him who is Lord of all." To this evasive sentence the disciple feebly rejoins, "You have cleared away the inconsistency which I thought existed." Seeing that Anselm was conducting the argument on both sides, it was easy for him to represent his interlocutor as completely satisfied; but no real disputant would have been disposed of in this summary fashion. Any seeker after truth who felt the difficulty, and had a little

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mat. vi. 14, 15; xviii. 21-35; Mark xi. 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> "*Cur Deus Homo?*" Bk. i. 12.

logic at command, would have said, "Your explanation is fallacious, for you speak of vengeance and forgiveness as if they exhausted the alternatives, which they certainly do not." Such a criticism would have been perfectly fair. Forgiveness is not a mere abstinence from self-avenging acts, but a total and hearty cancelling of the offence. I may refrain from avenging myself on one who has injured me, and yet be very far from forgiving him in my heart. In defiance of Christ's command I may refuse to hear him say, "I repent," or in obedience to Christ I may decline pardon because he will not confess his fault. In either case I may not avenge myself, and yet may lay my complaint before a human tribunal, or, refraining from all efforts to obtain redress on earth, I may carry my appeal to God. This last mode of action is one which Christ distinctly sanctioned and encouraged by the assurance that God will not be indifferent to the cry of those who suffer wrongfully. It is, indeed, what Christ Himself is said to have done on the cross. "Who, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously" (I. Peter ii. 23). Behind and above the workings of our fallible intellects and our easily perverted hearts we are assured that there is One who will rectify all mistakes and all injustice. If we forgive one who only simulates repentance, he will have to account for his hypocrisy as well as for his original offence before Him to whom all things are naked and open. If men injure us

with a high hand, "I will repay, saith the Lord."

It thus appears that one clear principle determines God's own dealings and inspires His commandments. It is not His will that man's misplaced mercy should prevail to clear the guilty, but His chief concern in issuing commandments is to guard against the restraint of mercy through our thirst for vengeance or our unjust suspicions. He Himself will review our decisions; but the only difference between His treatment of offenders and that which He enjoins upon us is one which inevitably springs from the difference between our capacity and His.

If any doubt remained, it should be dissipated by those marvellous words on which the Church of Rome has based her whole priestly system (Mat. xviii. 18-20; John xx. 23). Several questions of interpretation have excited angry disputation and still perplex expositors; but none of these wrangles touches the point to which I would call attention. Deeper than any questions in regard to the person, or persons, or bodies, or officials who are endued with authority to "bind and loose," there lies in these words a religious doctrine which no sophistry can explain away. Christ here proclaims that God can be relied upon to ratify the acts of men who have received and are led by the Holy Spirit. What such men bind on earth is bound in Heaven, and what they loose on earth is loosed in Heaven. Whosoever sins they remit are remitted, and whosoever sins they retain are retained. But it

would be impossible for God to thus ratify and make His own the acts of men, if the earthly law of pardon were not the counterpart of His own in Heaven. Hence, allowing for a measureless difference of authority and scope, to know the earthly law must be to know the essential principles of the Heavenly. Seeing, therefore, that the Holy Spirit cannot inspire and strengthen men to do anything at variance with our Lord's commands, and that the acts of men who are led by the Spirit are to be confirmed in Heaven, we are irresistibly brought to the conclusion that the law of forgiveness which Christ enjoined on His disciples is in perfect agreement with the nature and practice of God.

It thus becomes evident that when Anselm's literary puppet said, "You have cleared away the inconsistency which I thought existed," he, like his master, was deluded by a plausible scholastic quibble. The contradiction remained. It never has been, and never can be, explained away. Christ's moral precepts are the application of God's righteousness to our affairs; and the light which shines into our consciences is the radiance of the Divine Holiness. We are to be holy as He is holy, and perfect as He is perfect, and man is then most like to God when he frames his life and rules his spirit in finest harmony with the teachings of His Son.

It would be difficult to add to the conclusiveness of this plain and unstrained inference, but the argument would be incomplete unless we observed

the consistency of Christ's own treatment of sinners with His precept. The commandments of Christ are but a part of His teachings, and can never be divorced from the active life which illustrates and commends their beauty, and constitutes our perpetual example. In this exemplary life nothing was more lovely and nothing more conspicuous than that readiness to forgive which won for Him a crown of reproach as the "Friend of Sinners." To set forth all the features of this example we should have to reprint the Gospels, but the many incidents which displayed the tender mercy of Jesus are too familiar to require recital. Some striking features common to them are, however, so significant that they demand attention.

It will be acknowledged that when our Lord publicly absolved men from their sins He was not merely practising the duty of personal forgiveness, but exercising a prerogative which belongs to God alone. He was dealing, not with offences against Himself as a son of man, but with the accumulated guilt of many years ; in fact, with the whole burden of past sins against God. This marvellous claim to not merely preach but to bestow Divine forgiveness excludes any suggestion that Christ was acting only as our human exemplar and not as the Viceroy of God. It was this assumption of Divine authority which inflamed the anger of the Scribes and Pharisees ; and we must admit that these critics were more than justified in their indignation as long as they believed that Jesus was no greater than a prophet.

This brings to light another remarkable fact, viz., that although Christ was assailed with such a storm of denunciation, He never betrayed the least consciousness that His actions needed any moral explanation or defence. On the contrary, He blamed His censors, not merely for their failure to recognise His superhuman authority, but for impugning the righteousness of His ways with the outcasts of Israel. He often challenged their harsh judgments, and spoke some of His most beautiful parables to depict the joy of Heaven over repentant sinners. Twice He quoted the words in which Hosea spurned the idea that God required sacrifice rather than mercy. How, then, can we reconcile all this with the supposed eternal law that God cannot forgive unpunished sin?

We are often told that the remission of sin prior to the death of Christ was based upon the eternal value of that sacrifice, which, though offered late in human history, had no temporal limitations. I cordially accept that view when properly understood,<sup>1</sup> but this leaves the conduct of Christ unexplained. If it be true that all sin must be punished before it can be forgiven, the Pharisees were subjectively right in their condemnation of Christ. The theory affirms that Christ was only able to forgive sinners when on earth because about to bear the penalty they deserved. According to this opinion, therefore, Christ was acting all through

<sup>1</sup> Paul announces it in Rom. iii. 24-26; *cf.* exposition of this passage, pp. 198, 204.

His ministry in a manner which was justifiable only by His own secret knowledge of the future, and He was acting in a way which, so far as He allowed men to see, was wrong. Thus the Pharisees were blamed for objecting to conduct which, as far as they were in a position to judge, was incompatible with the first principles of justice! On this hypothesis they were entitled to receive information, not censure; and the words of Christ, the anger He displayed, and the very parables He painted to commend His ways, were neither kind nor candid, but, on the contrary, were eminently fitted to confound the moral judgments of His hearers. It is easy to reconcile the doctrine that sin must never go unpunished with the censorious judgments of the Pharisees; but it cannot be reconciled with what Christ taught men to do, or with what He did Himself, or with His stern reproof of those who blamed His mercy. Therefore, unless we are prepared to side with Jewish lawyers against Him who came to fulfil the law and the prophets, we must allow that the forgiveness of unpunished sin, under the conditions stated by Christ, is not a violation of law, or in any way a lowering of the Divine standard of justice, but that, on the contrary, it is an essential element of justice, so that its refusal to the contrite is unjust and a breach of that moral order which is the eternal constitution of the Kingdom of God.

Those who repudiate the doctrine that there is an essential principle in the Divine nature which

demands and necessitates the punishment of every sin are usually frowned upon by its advocates as tainted with a sickly indifference to the ruinous results and deadly guilt of transgression. Such an imputation may not in all cases be unfair, but when indiscriminately made it is odious and false. In view of this common accusation it may not be superfluous to disclaim sympathy with those who palliate iniquity. The God who commands our reverence is too pure to look upon iniquity without abhorrence. He can never tolerate sin, for His nature is eternally antagonistic to it. He has declared that judgment is His strange work ; but the lurid history of nations, the voice of the judging faculty within our hearts, the voices of holy prophets and seers, and, above all, the words and the blood of Christ, unite to convince us that He will never flinch from judgment in due season. He has no pleasure in the death of sinners, yet no pity for their sufferings can ever induce Him to condone or to compound transgression. He can no more dwell at peace with sin than light can dwell with darkness, or fire combine with fuel without consuming it.

These statements should satisfy the most exacting mind ; but they are not all that can and must be said, for they do but introduce a final objection to the dogma which underlies all Penal theories of the Atonement, viz.,

4. That this dogma fails to do justice to the intensity and inexorableness of the Divine repugnance to sin.



To some minds this objection may appear startling and paradoxical. What could be stronger, they will ask, than their assertion that there is an essential principle in the Divine nature which demands the punishment of sin? The reply is obvious. Let us strike out the word "punishment" and insert the word "extermination," and the proposition will be strengthened enormously.<sup>1</sup>

As thus intensified the formula would be acceptable to many thinkers, but for grave reasons I cannot adopt it without further amendment. I am well assured that God desires the extermination of sin, and that there is an essential principle in His nature which can never be satisfied with mere punishment; but I dare not presume to assert that the Divine nature unconditionally demands the total extermination of sin. There are only two conceivable methods by which sin can be exterminated, viz., by the salvation of sinners from their sin, or by their extinction as persons. In regard to individuals these methods are mutually exclusive, but in a vast sphere of government both may operate, and the second may be kept in reserve as a last expedient to be adopted in all cases of failure to save individuals. By either method the universe might conceivably be cleansed, but it would also be effectually purified if some sinners were sanctified and the incurable residuum destroyed. But the two methods, apart or in combination, exhaust the possibilities of extermination, and must therefore be separately considered.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 9.

Universalists contend that anything less than the rescue of all moral beings from the power of evil and their ultimate crowning with righteousness and joy would be a reflection on God's honour, and would amount to His failure as our Creative Father and King. But this is only a speculative opinion, and cannot be treated as a religious axiom and so made the foundation of a theory. I have intense sympathy with those who rejoice in the faith that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth; but while through the love of Christ I humbly cherish this Divine desire and cultivate the hope that the Great Father will have the glory and delight of seeing the last dead son restored to life again and the last of all the lost brought home, I dare not say that any consummation which fell short of this would leave a shadow of disgrace on God or be inconsistent with His goodness. We know but little of the persistence of rebellious wills when consciously committed to a warfare against goodness. We ought not, therefore, to presume so far as to assert that God, who in the Gospel makes an appeal to man's volitional nature through his heart and intellect, will ever depart from this method, which necessarily involves the abstract possibility of partial non-success and therefore excludes dogmatic Universalism.

This and other weighty objections to Universalism are shared by many who nevertheless assert in an unqualified manner that God must and will exterminate sin. They recognise a possible persistence

in rebellion, but affirm that final perseverance in sin will issue in the extinction of being. Again refraining from a long parenthetical discussion, I have simply to insist that the theory of conditional immortality is only a theory, and neither a self-evident nor a demonstrated truth. Locke was logically right in his contention that the natural immortality of the soul is not proved or provable; but he was not so unwise as to regard this as a proof of its natural mortality. Scripture and metaphysics have given no final utterance on this subject. For all we know, the Creator may have made an indestructible creature when He made man. We may feel an irresistible assurance that eternal conscious suffering will not be the portion of any moral being; but our strongest and most instinctive conviction on such a subject does not amount to knowledge. On this account I am not prepared to assert that, failing the salvation of all God's creatures, the unpurified must be annihilated, or will naturally sink into nothingness. With our present limited knowledge we are not entitled to exceed the statement, that God's nature as revealed to us in Christ demands the extermination of sin *to the utmost possible degree of completeness*, and in this word "possible," moral as well as dynamical considerations must be included. This means that, in our judgment *it is a necessity of God's nature to adopt all measures which are congruous with a righteous use of omnipotence to secure the ultimate extermination of sin.*

It will be observed that the proposition thus laid

down does not shut the door against any theory of Divine salvation, or any scheme of Divine discipline or retribution which is in itself righteous, and has *the extermination of sin for its object*. It assumes nothing which any advocate of the Penal theory can reasonably object to as false, or even as disputable; and it denies nothing which he can be anxious to affirm. But although the proposition is thus neutral, or largely tolerant, in its precise terms, this neutrality disappears when it is read in conjunction with the reasonings and Scriptural teachings concerning the nature of God, which have been set forth in preceding discussions. As the outcome of all our objections to the dogma that God's nature demands the inexorable punishment of all sin, we are now in a position to affirm that there is in the Divine nature a principle which delights in mercy, and which finds its supreme satisfaction in the salvation of sinners from their sin. How far and in what manner this Divine compassion and graciousness can be exercised in the forgiveness of sin without thwarting the desire to banish sin from the creation, is the problem to be discussed. May we not also reverently say that this was the problem which awaited God's solution when He beheld the ravages of evil in our world? He could not cease to detest sin, for the more He loved the sons of men the more hateful would the cause of their ruin and misery appear. Against sin He must use all the righteous resources of omnipotence in a truceless

war of extermination. But for man's sake, and for His own joy and glory as a benignant Creator, He must also do everything righteously possible for man's redemption. How, then, could these two necessities of God's nature be unified in action? This is the question now before us. The one clear truth which has thus far been established, is that the Divine nature could not conceivably be satisfied with the mere infliction of punishment, for this would fail to satisfy either of God's feelings and purposes. He who is full of compassion and gracious cannot find satisfaction in the ruin and death of His creatures. He who seeks the extermination of sin cannot find satisfaction in the infliction of penal sufferings which inevitably tend to prolong and aggravate the sin which God abhors.

We may now lay down two propositions which are absolutely fundamental and vital statements of ascertained Scriptural teaching, and must therefore be regarded as first principles on which all further discussion must be based and by which all theories of Atonement must be tried.

1. It is a necessity of God's nature to adopt all possible measures which are congruous with a righteous use of omnipotence to secure the ultimate extermination of sin.

2. It is a necessity of God's nature to adopt all measures which are congruous with a righteous use of omnipotence to secure the salvation of sinners.

These two principles must never be divorced. To many minds they may seem to be incompatible and to require totally different measures for their fulfilment. They will be found, however, to be strictly complementary. They correspond to two Scriptural statements of the purpose for which Christ came into the world as the anointed Servant of the Father and of man. "To this end the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil" (I. John iii. 8). "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). Many similar statements might be adduced, *e.g.*, "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" (John iii. 17). Our two propositions are therefore in harmony with this account of the twofold object of the Incarnation. Neither is Scriptural if divorced from the other and presented as a complete truth. Each imposes on the other an ethical condition. Together, they exclude both unrighteous lenity and vindictive severity. The one forbids the salvation of persons at the cost of tolerating sin. The other forbids the extermination of sin at the cost of any avoidable injury to persons. The two principles find their synthesis in that account of God which proclaims Him "a just God and a Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 21), and again as "the Lord which exercise loving-

kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth" (Jer. ix. 24). This ancient theism has its culminating expression and its living interpretation in Him who came into the world not to destroy law but to fulfil it, and yet was called "the Friend of Sinners."

## LECTURE III

### THE FACTORS OF THE PROBLEM OF ATONEMENT

HAVING submitted what appear to be adequate reasons for rejecting the Penal theory of Atonement as unscriptural, we are now free to institute an independent inquiry concerning the measures by which God is able to satisfy the demands of His nature for the widest possible salvation of men and the most effectual destruction of sin. While prosecuting this inquiry we might refuse to consider any objections against our own principles which may be expected to proceed from advocates of the theory set aside. It is not my intention, however, to adopt so peremptory a course. It might save time, but it would not assist conviction, nor would it be altogether logical. It is one thing to dispose of a theory as unsatisfactory, and quite another to build up and defend a better in its place. The falsity of one is no proof that any second theory is true. Hence it will be our wisdom and duty hereafter to give a respectful attention to all actual or anticipated objections as step by step



we may come into collision with prevalent ideas. This may appear to revive a discussion which has been closed, but it will, I trust, serve to confirm our fundamental principles, to dissipate misgivings in minds predisposed against them, and it will have the further advantage of bringing to light the true meaning of important terms which are widely and grievously misunderstood.

### GOD'S MEASURES.

The measures which God could righteously adopt for the extirpation of sin and the salvation of men are necessarily determined by four great factors in the problem of moral government in a world depraved by sin: viz., The Nature of God; The Nature of Man; The Nature of Sin; and The Disastrous Consequences of Sin.

The Divine nature must necessarily be the paramount factor in the determination of God's actions. He cannot deny or stultify Himself by the use of unworthy means, even for the holiest ends. Human nature must also have an essential place, and must be preserved intact in any real process of salvation. Even to undo the ruinous effects of sin God cannot destroy manhood without a confession of creative error. Moreover, if manhood were abolished, there would be no salvation of men, for the resultant being would no longer be a man. Hence no essential attribute of human nature must be superseded or violated by any process which has for its

object the recovery of human nature itself from the malady of sin. It is equally evident that the nature of Sin itself must inevitably affect, and in some degree determine, the means by which it can be remedied or exterminated. No one who misunderstands the disease can prescribe its remedy, or effectually remove its cause, or even appreciate the remedy which God has Himself prepared.

These three are the primary factors of the problem; but the multiform consequences of sin have unspeakably complicated the task of salvation and aggravated the difficulty of extermination. Some discussion of the nature of these consequences will therefore be indispensable.

### 1. *The Nature of God.*

Our discussion of the Penal theory of Atonement has included a partial, and for negative purposes, a sufficient review of Scriptural teachings concerning God's nature, but I have advisedly postponed any notice of the Johannine doctrine that "God is Love." All that has been said is consistent with the idea that love is a pregnant word which includes all God's moral attributes; but the term is used in so many different senses that it requires a separate and independent study before we can use it in an argument without causing confusion.

There is probably no word in the English language which has suffered more from misuse, and

abuse, than this word love. It has been made to do duty for many different purposes, and to express not only many different shades of meaning, but some altogether opposite meanings—meanings which are rather comparable to contrasted colours than to varied tones and depths of a single colour. At one extreme it stands for a kind of sensual lust, which is the most intensely selfish passion that we know, a passion which if uncontrolled by reason, or by an overmastering sense of duty, leads to the most remorseless desecration of its objects, and violates every law of kindness and every principle of social right. At the opposite extreme, and distinctively in the Bible, the term love stands for a holy affection which subordinates all self-regarding desires to the one desire to confer a blessing on its objects, and is therefore the inspiration of self-sacrifice instead of self-indulgence. The symbol of one is a satyr—mere animal passion linked with human intelligence—the Incarnation of Lust. The symbol of the other is a crucified Friend of Sinners—the Incarnation of God, which is the incarnation of a Love which is love indeed. Between these two extremes the word stands for many complex feelings, some pure, others impure and subtly intermixed in infinitely varied proportions. But, although the term has this many-coloured significance, it will be found that as popularly used and understood it nearly always connotes the idea of preference and pleasurable regard. On many lips it means merely an intenser kind of liking, an affection which seeks its own delectation in a

pleasant object, and may, therefore, glow as fervently in unholy breasts as in the pure. The ethical element of goodwill is often, but not always or nearly always, implied.

The love of parents for children, of husband for wife, and of friend for friend should always be ethical, but it is not always so conceived, and certainly is often far from ethical in fact. Yet, whatever its quality, it is called by the same name. In its highest developments it becomes a sacred and sanctifying affection, and not seldom it rises to the glory of self-denial. This love for nearest kindred often triumphs over the provocations of ill-temper, the repellent influence of physical or moral deformity, and lives on in spite of ill-requital, neglect, and even active hostility. In such cases it is transformed into, or at least partakes of, that love which seeketh not her own, and is nothing less than the pure white flame of holiness.<sup>1</sup> But too frequently it is only a marked form of selfishness, as in the typical case of Eli, who loved his sons too little and himself too well to take the pain of inflicting salutary pain on them in early life, and so he feebly watched their progress in licentiousness, until at last there came a catastrophe which brought the whole family to shame.

Blended with this desire to find pleasure in the possession of its object there is usually a wish to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. I. Thess. iii. 11-13. "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men . . . to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God."

give pleasure also but, without being cynical, it is easy to detect at least a partial explanation of much which passes for disinterested affection in the fact that it is pleasanter to see our friends enjoy themselves than it is to behold them in sorrow or pain, however profitable such sufferings may be as instruments of moral and religious discipline. The love which can constrain a sensitive and sympathetic nature to inflict such disciplinary pain with firmness and constancy may not be altogether rare; but where existent, and manifested, it is very commonly suspected, especially by its objects, as at least a dubious form of affection.

The prevalence of low and even vitiated ideas of love is betrayed in many common expressions, and these expressions again react to confirm and still further degrade the thoughts. When, for example, a foolishly indulgent mother has lived to see an undisciplined child become a victim to his own unregulated passions, she has no sense of incongruity in half-accusing, half-excusing herself by saying, "I loved my boy too well"; whereas the truth is that, like Eli, she has loved herself too much and preferred the luxury of smiles and caresses to the pain of enforcing rigorous self-control. Similarly it is no extraordinary thing for a woman to be murdered by a so-called "lover" because he is jealous of her preference for someone else. In such a case the murderer's stock excuse is, "I did it because I loved her so much." But what is far more significant than the utterance of such a ghastly paradox is that the

Press will report the poor deluded wretch's language without betraying any surprise at the monstrous misuse of the word "love."

Less melancholy, perhaps, but more fatally misleading samples of bad usage may be found in the phraseology of the nursery—a place of supreme importance to the theologian, because religious ideas there take a form which can with difficulty be changed in after life. A false thought is instilled into the minds of children by phrases which confound love with approval and endearing signs of favour. It is quite an ordinary thing for a child to be threatened thus—"I shall not love you if you do this or that." Similarly after disobedience the little one is told with a frown, "I cannot love you now." But worse than even these deplorable sayings are the corresponding formulæ which tend to darken the understanding and hinder subsequent belief in the Gospel:—"God does not love those who act thus"; "God will not love you if you do that."

Such nursery quotations may be thought beneath the dignity of a theological discussion, but they are highly important and most significant, because inseparably connected with a corresponding looseness and inaccuracy in the language of professed theologians. Marcion's heresy was founded upon the same erroneous idea of love as we have found in modern nurseries; and out of this same confusion have sprung direct denials or evasive obscurations of the plain New Testament doctrine that God loves sinners,

together with covert suggestions and even positive statements that God is the enemy of sinners until He is reconciled by Christ.

How far theological teachings have caused a popular misuse of the term love, and how far the popular usage has contributed to produce the graver fault, may be doubtful, and need scarcely trouble us. The essential fact is that the same error is rife among divines and infants, and these two forms of error must inevitably act and react on each other. Thus the language of the nursery represents a state of mind which religious teachers have at least fostered, and it is also a potent formative influence which for centuries has been working in innumerable Christian homes to perpetuate the ideas it expresses. Children are so familiarised with the notion that love is dependent upon goodness and pleasantness in its objects, that in after years they receive corresponding dogmas without surprise or protest. Thus the very words in which the reconciling truth is proclaimed are vitiated, and the inevitable poverty of language is aggravated by a debasement of that golden word love, which may be called the chief coin in that intellectual currency which is our sole medium of exchange in the realm of religious thought.

The difficulty thus indicated is not peculiar to the English language, but besets the Christian teacher in all the tongues spoken among men. Readers of the English Bible might perhaps have been aided a little if at some earlier stage in our history an effort had been made to translate the

different Greek terms now rendered "love" by different English words ; but this help would at best have been restricted within very narrow limits, and it has long since become impossible. The New Testament writers had a more varied choice of terms at their command than we have, but the ideas associated with each were viler than any which trouble us. They were compelled to take the language of common life, and thus to use words which had been grievously tainted and debased by impure lips. Happily these words were charged with power, because, although linked with vice, they were also linked with all that was sweetest, tenderest, and strongest in family life ; but, still, it was an arduous task to purge these words and consecrate them to noblest use by filling them with new meanings which had come into human thought from Christ.

Students may gather rich harvests of thought and gain many vivid views of truth by studying the force of the Greek synonyms, but no study of the terms apart from the teachings in which they occur can discover the Biblical idea for which they are made to stand. The classical value of the terms cannot determine their force in the New Testament, for the New Testament writers have enriched and glorified them. They have indeed so thoroughly reminted them that they come to us as intellectual coins, on which has been impressed the image and superscription of Christ. Hence it is happily true that all who aspire to know what love means in a



truly Biblical theology may find it out by reading carefully what is written in their mother tongue. John gives us the true key to this knowledge in his great saying, "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us." Such language is a clear warning that we may not regard our notions of love as an ideal standard by which to appraise the love of God, but must correct our notions by the Cross. Our wisdom is to take the thought that Christ died for us, and accept this as the revelation of what love is, and therefore of what God is, because "God is love." No philological discourse, no subtleties or profundities of scholarship, can impart the knowledge we require. Love submits not to analysis, and it baffles all description. It must be seen in living action to be felt, and it must be felt in order to be understood. *The nature of love is an integral part of the Christian revelation,* and it can no more be conveyed by abstract propositions than day can be caused to dawn by an essay upon Light.

He who would know what love is must read the gospel story, but the whole Bible is full of pregnant hints, and even Sinai is bright with fore-gleams of the light of Calvary. Take the terse, unemotional precepts of the law, and in one part you read "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Thy neighbour" must include male and female, *i.e.*, thy neighbour and thy neighbour's wife and daughter and maid-servant. But the love thus enjoined cannot savour of passionate desire, for elsewhere the law

becomes a prohibition of all selfish craving for one whose beauty and charm may fascinate but who is the treasure of a fellow-man. Again, the injunction to love cannot conceivably have been intended as a command to delight ourselves in all our neighbours, or to like them all equally well and thus take equal pleasure in their persons and ways. These neighbours are the common people round about us, with their many faults and blemishes; but nevertheless the law commands us to love them. No freedom is left for the selection of those agreeable to our taste, whether æsthetic or moral, nor are we permitted to turn away from the unattractive and unfit. Obedience to this law admits of no waiting for overtures to be made to us, no stipulation for winsomeness of manner, or for prior deeds of kindness. Love is commanded as a duty, not recommended as a luxury. The mandate, "Thou shalt love," permits absolutely no choice of persons, and sternly shuts out those specious replies to its behests which men are prone to offer, and by which they palliate if not defend their callousness and neglect. My neighbour may be repulsive and degraded, scornful or despicable. He may have deceived, defamed or persecuted me. He may have ravaged my country and desolated my home, but the Great Judge will not accept any such plea as a justification of hatred or a callous withholding of kindness.

Christ added nothing essential to this old law of love by His parable of the Good Samaritan. He simply tore away the moss of traditional interpreta-

tion which had overgrown the ancient stones of Sinai, and, having first of all, as a new finger of God, retraced the worn lettering, He afterwards shed thereon a heavenly light in his parabolic exposition. Even the widening out of the word "neighbour" beyond the limits of traditional interpretations was not an expansion of the old commandment, for the Deuteronomist had given a similar scope to the law by declaring that God "regardeth not persons . . . and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment," and on this fact he founded the illimitable precept "Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. x. 19). That this was no casual utterance, but a vital and dominant principle, is evident from the manifold precepts which give specific directions as to the ways in which love is to be expressed to strangers, and from the broad command, "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger as for the homeborn: for I am the Lord your God" (Lev. xxiv. 22).<sup>1</sup>

The book of Jonah may be either history or parable, but in any case it was a reproof lesson, meant to teach the Hebrews that God's love is not a mere liking for a chosen family, but embraces Israel's proudest enemies as truly as the sons of Abraham. There was nothing attractive in the people of Nineveh, yet God constrained a Hebrew prophet to become their minister, and the withered gourd taught Jonah's kinsmen forever that they should love their heathen neighbours as themselves,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 10.

and that their national mission in the world was to preach God's mercy to mankind.

Coming to the New Testament we find the same idea of love, not changed but more impressively revealed as a moral duty, rather than a passion of desire for, or luxurious delight in, those who, in a common phrase would be called "lovable persons." It is noteworthy also that this duty is everywhere enjoined on the ground of its correspondence to the spirit and character of God. Thus Christ taught in His sermon on the mount "I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you, *that ye may be sons of your Father which is in Heaven*" (Mat. v. 44-5). Unless God loves His enemies, Christ has deluded us in this precept. He declares that if we only "love them that love us" we are no better than publicans and pagans; but that we resemble God most nearly when we love our enemies and do them good, "despairing of no man." (Luke vi. 35 margin).

Can any reader of Christ's words doubt that in such teachings we are distinctly required to distinguish between the sins which are hateful and the sinners who are to be loved, or that our love is meant to be a reconciling force and a moral help to deliver from evil those who hate and injure us and ours? This precept, prior to the Cross and to the great apostolic commission, contains in itself a call for the same kind of love for man as man as was displayed on the day of Pentecost. Mary, the mother of Jesus, then united with His brothers and with

His most affectionate friends in preaching forgiveness to the city crowd which had a few weeks before shrieked for His crucifixion. Subsequently they welcomed Christ's murderers into a brotherhood which for ever widened the significance of the word *philadelphia*, *i.e.*, brotherly love. Such a spectacle as that of Pentecost was a new thing in the earth, but it was not new in principle. It was simply a glorified fulfilment of the ancient law. The preaching of salvation by the apostles, and their reception into fellowship of men who had hated their beloved One without a cause, is a perpetual proof that a new spirit had come to live in human hearts ; but it is also an evidence that this Spirit is the Spirit of God.

When the gospel is preached, to the effect that God loved the world, men who possess only earthly thoughts of love naturally feel staggered. But in the light of the commandments, and in the light of that unique historic scene when the mother and friends of Jesus came fresh from the tragedy of Calvary and besought multitudes who had blood upon their hands to read in that shed blood, not a sign which clamoured to heaven for revenge, like the blood of Abel, but a sacred seal of their victim's offer of forgiveness, we gather faith to read the Divinest of all oracles as a proclamation that God loves the world in spite of all its crimes and all its enmity. So read, it tells us that God can suffer human hatred for ages and still be kind ; that He is ever seeking costliest ways of doing good to all ; that, looking down upon the awful sight pre-

sented by a world lying in wickedness, He has never despaired, but, as the God of Hope, has made an unspeakable sacrifice to fill His sinful creatures with a sanctifying joy and peace in believing in His love.

To these thoughts all the later teachings of the New Testament are conformed. To exhibit them in any completeness would require a volume. I must be content in this place simply to justify the fundamental distinction between the love which is mere preferential liking for objects which are enjoyable because in themselves beautiful, desirable, and satisfying to the heart, and that love which yearns to give rather than receive, to bless rather than to obtain blessedness, to do good, to relieve, to uplift, to purify and glorify, and which, having this ministry in prospect, will bear pain and loss, encounter peril, despise shame, and endure whatever can be called a cross for the sake of blessing others, even though the more abundantly it outpours itself in sacrificial service the less it be loved in return.

Before leaving this theme it may be well to again emphasise the fact which called for its discussion—viz., that love is not reduced in the Scriptures to a mere attribute and so placed on a par with justice, mercy, pity, kindness, compassion. None of these terms is regarded as sufficiently broad and comprehensive to stand for a complete expression of God's nature; *e.g.*, it is never said, "God is Justice," or "God is Mercy," but only that He is merciful or just. On the other hand it is never said that "God is loving," but it is said that "God *is* Love"; and in

the context we are told that they who know what love is know God. Thus there is more in love than in any single moral attribute, for God's nature is the sum of all His attributes, and there is nothing in any moral attribute which can be excluded from a worthy idea of love, for there can be no incongruous elements in God. Justice and mercy may conflict in imperfect creatures who lack some element in one or both of these qualities, but this is a mark of personal defectiveness. Pure love will never be unmerciful, and therefore will never be needlessly severe; but it is equally certain that love will never be unjust, and never so unkind as to flinch from any severity which may be requisite for the wholesome discipline of transgressors and the protection of the innocent.

The theme is boundless, and this discussion of it is but fragmentary; but enough has been said to warrant the conclusion that whether we conceive of God as a Father, a King, or a Judge, there is nothing derogatory to His character or enfeebling to our sense of His authority in the declaration that love stands for all that God is, and that nothing may be predicated of Him morally which cannot be resolved into some element or some aspect of love. God would not be love if He could behold His creatures perishing of sin without doing everything possible for their salvation, and this truth is written in our hearts by the cross. But it is equally true, and indeed it is a part of the same truth that God would not be love if He could behold His creatures corrupting, debauching, or in any way injuring each other with-

out anger or without sufficient force of character to visit their transgressions with the rod. The more certain we are of His love the more certain we must be that He is against them that do evil, and will shrink from no measures which may be needful for the good government of the world. Because He is love He cannot tolerate hatred, malice, fraud, or any works which wrong the soul of the doer and mar the life and peace of others. God's love for all His creatures must render Him inexorable in warfare against wickedness, and among the many truths which are written as with flaming letters on the cross, this awe-inspiring gospel can be read: That He who spared not His own Son will spare no agony or blood which may be needful for the maintenance of His Law of Love among men. The cross is God's definition of Himself. "Hereby know we love"; and in this the Divine nature is revealed.<sup>1</sup>

## II. *The Nature of Man and of Sin.*

The nature of man and the nature of sin are so intimately related that any attempt to treat them separately would involve needless repetition. It is impossible to define sin without assuming the existence of man, or of some manlike being, and it is impossible to define man as a moral agent without at least implying the nature and possibility of sin. Our present inquiry does not call for a complete study of anthropology or of moral science. Our

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note II.



subject presupposes that man is a being capable of committing what is called sin, and our sole concern is to ascertain the true significance of this term in Christian theology, and the qualities or attributes of human nature which constitute man a moral agent, and therefore capable of committing sin.

The wisdom of unifying the discussion appears in the fact that the best definition of sin which has ever been given carries within the full significance of its terms a sufficiently inclusive account of human nature. "Sin is lawlessness" (I. John iii. 4). John here identifies two terms which are etymologically different. He declares that *ἀμαρτία* (*i.e.*, a missing of the mark) is *ἀνομία* (*i.e.* lawlessness), and he doeth the one doeth the other. By missing the mark, therefore, he does not mean what the Greek term is often attenuated to denote, *viz.*, an innocent failure to strike an object aimed at. The man who misses the mark of which John speaks is not a well-meaning archer who does his best to hit the right target but fails. He is a man who culpably misses the true end of life because he disregards the guidance of law. In other words, he is guilty of transgression (*παράβασις*), *i.e.*, he steps over the line of duty marked off by law, and he does this because his steps are not ordered by any rule of conduct but inclination or self-will. The figurative terms are different, and each is instructive and has a distinctive use but John's account of sin is comprehensive. It includes not only the act of disobedience to written or oral instructions but also the disregard of moral

obligation. It covers not only acts but also abstinence from action, and even the abiding state of mind which finds occasional expression in acts of disobedience to some known rule of life and duty. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness."

This teaching is sufficiently clear and leaves no fair excuse for misunderstanding; but the whole of its purport is not drawn out in explicit terms, and therefore it becomes necessary to examine its content and to ascertain its presuppositions. Happily these are not obscure. The doing of sin implies a doer, and the state of sin or lawlessness implies the existence of an intelligent, volitional being who is capable of knowing and disobeying a law, and of living in culpable disregard of it when known. Lawlessness furthermore implies the existence of a law and some actual knowledge of it. It presupposes also the existence of a law-giver and judge. Hence John's definition of sin presupposes the existence of God as a moral governor, of man as a moral agent, and the impartation to man of some knowledge of the law to which he is required to conform his life. Hence without adding to, or deducting anything from, John's definition, except a verbal statement of its indisputable presuppositions, we may re-state it thus. Sin is the transgression of the Divine law by a moral agent, *i.e.*, by a person who is morally accountable for his actions because possessed of some knowledge of duty and some power of choice and self-direction.

John's doctrine is thus in perfect accord with Paul's dictum, "Where there is no law neither is there transgression" (Rom. iv. 15); and again, "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (v. 13). Thus, according to both these apostles, lawlessness implies not only that a law is existent, but that it exists for the mind of the moral agent who disobeys it—*i.e.*, that it is in some form existent as a rule of duty in his mind. Paul never conceived the absence of law from the universe, but he did conceive and deal with the fact that pagans were ignorant of the Mosaic law, and he held them innocent of disobedience to it. They were capable of being lawless only because they had a law written in their minds.

This definition is not likely to be challenged as false, but it may be objected to as incomplete. Some writers assume that the word "transgression" denotes only an act of disobedience to declared law, and on this ground they add to the definition words affirming the sinfulness of any moral state of non-conformity to the law of God. But these additional words must be rejected, (*a*) because, while true in part they affirm too much, and are often held to justify one of the most deplorable mistakes ever made by theologians, and, (*b*) because, to whatever extent they are true, they are superfluous.

(*a*) It is true, as already indicated, that lawlessness includes the state of one who, whether consciously or unconsciously, is disobedient in spirit as well as in act to a known law; but it is not true that it includes the state of one who is actually but unconsciously in

a condition of non-conformity to a law of which he has and can have no knowledge. It is true also that lawlessness includes the state of one who despises, ignores, or carelessly disregards his moral obligations; but it cannot include the state of one who has never attained to a consciousness of any moral obligation whatever. Hence it is true to say that some states of unconscious non-conformity to law are sinful; but if more than this is affirmed the proposition becomes false.

(*b*) But while admitting that there is a certain element of truth in the proposed addition to our definition of sin, I must insist that even to this extent it is superfluous. The word "transgression" cannot be restricted to acts, but is wide enough to include moral states, as far as the rest of the definition permits them to be included. God's law not only requires certain acts and forbids others, but it condemns certain states of mind and heart and demands others. Therefore the man who declines or neglects to cultivate the disposition and affections which God approves, and tolerates in himself the affections and dispositions which God forbids and out of which acts of transgression naturally spring, is therein a transgressor of the law. The state of a man may thus be sinful, *i.e.*, culpable and deserving of penalty, because as a moral agent he has neglected the primary duty of ruling his own spirit and keeping his own heart. The moral state of a man may be, and commonly is, his worst condemnation. A bad man is not less a sinner in God's sight when quiescent, or

even asleep, than he is when awake and committing murder or theft ; just as a bad tree is of the same quality when its boughs are bare in winter as it is when they are laden with sour fruit in autumn.

The comparison thus instituted is helpful in more ways than one. It impresses the lesson that while men may be known by their conduct, they will be judged and praised or blamed chiefly for what they are. But it also sets us thinking about the essential difference between a man and a tree—viz., that to some extent at least a man is responsible for what he is, whereas a tree is not. A tree does not become a bad tree through bringing forth bad fruit, but, growing without choice, it necessarily puts forth fruit according to its nature. We cut it down because we are vexed and disappointed, but our axe is not wielded to punish the tree ; we do not blame the useless thing, and simply remove it to make room for a better. But a bad man has usually become what he is not solely, but to a great extent, as the result of repeated transgressions. His character has been determined by habits, and his habits had a beginning in isolated acts of disobedience or abstentions from obedience. He has allowed evil feelings to find a lodgment. He has allowed his thoughts to dwell on unlawful pleasures, and so has inflamed his cupidity or lust. In this way, or in countless ways which resemble this in principle, the man has corrupted himself and basely yielded to temptation. Hence, in a deep sense what he is is the fruit of what he has done and left undone ; and he deserves to be con-

demned because he is what he ought not to have become.

But here the question arises, Is this a full account of the case? Is this the complete natural history of a bad man? Instantly, and with one accord, theologians of all schools, and men who simply study the phenomena of heredity and sociology with scientific eyes, reply emphatically, "No." They have different theories, and look on the facts from remote standpoints and with most dissimilar interests and feelings; but all agree that the bad man of to-day is to no small extent the product of his progenitors and of the environment which has been developed by the history of the human race. He did not choose the qualities of his flesh and blood, the time and place of his birth, the moral surroundings of his infancy and childhood, or the ideas which were instilled into his mind before he acquired the power to reflect and to judge for himself. Is he, then, responsible as a moral agent for his state, in so far as this state is the product of forces which he did not originate and had absolutely no power to avoid or repel or resist?

In asking this question I assume nothing prematurely in the way of answer. Some tell us, Yes, he is in a wrong moral state, and therefore he is guilty of sin. He was born thus sinful, and, as such, was subject to the condemnation of God, and is deserving of eternal death. Others go to an opposite extreme and declare that every man is the product of forces which have made him what he is,

and that therefore he is no more responsible for his character than a tree is responsible for the shape of its branches or the colour of its leaves. Others, again, consider both these judgments wrong, yet despair of finding a middle truth, or of so defining sin as to include what is true and exclude what is false in each. Whether the definition already given can be accepted as supplying this desideratum remains to be seen. But enough has been said to show cause why we must refrain from any definition of sin which forecloses the great question at issue. A wholesale and unqualified inclusion of unhealthy moral states in our definition would logically compel us to hold men responsible for the injuries they have suffered and the defects they have inherited, as well as for the corruptions and blemishes which they have brought upon themselves as volitional beings. It is because I have to maintain that these two formative principles are absolutely different that I adhere to a definition of sin which does not exclude all wrong moral states, yet does not sweepingly include them all.

An attempt is sometimes made to avoid the ethical fault of confounding guiltless defects of moral nature with the acts and states for which moral agents are personally responsible by eliminating the idea of culpability from the term "sin." When sin has been defined as "any lack of conformity either of the moral state of the soul, or of the actions of a man to the law of God," the way has been opened for the Augustinian doctrine that men

are born sinful in a sense which includes guiltiness and liability to punishment. But writers who abhor this dogma sometimes continue to use the language which was framed to express it, but insist that the term sin (*hamartia*) may be used, and is used, to denote the effects of Adam's transgression on his posterity, but without any implication of blame, *e.g.*, Dr. Fairbairn declares that to Paul "*ἁμαρτία* did not denote the idea of culpability or guilt."<sup>1</sup> It may be true that Paul sometimes used the word sin in this attenuated sense, and many writers and preachers use it thus to-day. But Paul did not always thus use it, nor can we always restrict it to this meaning. When discussing God's method of dealing with man's acts and moral state we must, in order to avoid confusion, have some term for what is culpable; and if we deny ourselves the use of "sin" for this purpose, what is left? We cannot in every sentence use qualifying adjectives and say "guilty sin" or "guiltless sin," nor can we use the term in a fluctuating and ambiguous fashion without perpetuating misunderstandings and perilous confusion of thought. Hence, particularly when engaged in a critical investigation, we must elect to use it in one sense only; and, doing this, we have no option but to use it to denote what is culpable as well as inaccordant with the will of God. This assertion is made for the cogent, and, I submit, the unanswerable reason that we must of necessity make use of the word "sin" as it is used in the prayer "Forgive us

<sup>1</sup> *Christ in Modern Theology*, 312, note.



our sins," and in reference to Christ as exalted to be a "Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins." Dr. Fairbairn exhibits this necessity in another part of the volume I have quoted, for when defining sin he writes, "It involves, like evil, the notions of suffering and loss; like vice, the notions of disobedience and blame; like crime, the notions of revolt and wrong, culpability and penalty" (p. 453). This sentence is admirable, and whether Paul always uses *ἁμαρτία* in this sense or not, he certainly used it in this sense when he wrote "Sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. v. 13), and in many other places. It assuredly represents the meaning attached to the word sin by ordinary Englishmen; it also denotes the sin which is the subject of our definition; and it correctly describes what I shall denote by the word sin in the discussions which follow.

Before leaving our definition we may guard it against misunderstandings and suspicion by some observations on a common but most fallacious use of the terms "conscious" and "unconscious." These terms have frequently been employed antithetically to define the difference between what is culpable, and what, though inharmonious with God's law, is not culpably so. Not a few writers and preachers habitually speak of "unconscious" non-conformity to law as necessarily blameless, and this naturally leads their opponents to suspect any definition which does not explicitly assert the contrary; it also tempts

them to make sweeping assertions on the other side. At the risk of repetition I therefore desire to make my own position clear by laying down a precise proposition, and by some endeavour to elucidate its significance and importance. The following is the proposition I submit: every conscious transgression of law is sinful, and some unconscious transgressions are sinful, but some are sinless.

∧ The importance of this statement and the nature of the issue raised by it may be seen by some reference to a passage in a truly admirable essay on "The Bible View of Sin" by the late Principal Cave.<sup>1</sup> Having defined sin as "transgression of the Divine law by a moral agent," the writer proceeds to inquire: "But must this transgression necessarily be conscious? . . . Is the hardened and habitual and unconscious transgressor also a sinner? Nay, more, is the new-born child a sinner too? Does the hereditary relation involve the child in sin prior to its own sinful acts?" These inquiries, which are surely separate and distinct, the writer consolidates and answers as if one. "The Bible reply is clear: 'There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God'" (Rom. iii. 22-23). To this he appends the remark, "nor is this utterance of Paul individualistic."

Any reader of this representative statement might naturally conclude that Paul had really given an opinion on the questions asked, and had laid it down

<sup>1</sup> Cf. a volume of essays by different authors entitled *The Ancient Faith in Modern Light*, p. 128.

with authority that there is no distinction between the classes referred to—*i.e.*, that there is no distinction between the “hardened and habitual and unconscious sinner” and “the new-born child” because both alike have sinned unconsciously. But when we turn to Paul’s letter we find that new-born infants are not mentioned throughout his prolonged discussion of sin and justification, and that there is ample ground for the assertion that they were not before his mind while charging all men with sin. In the immediate context of the words quoted the apostle deals with his subject in a manner which absolutely excludes any reference to those who have no knowledge of law, and consequently no knowledge of sin. His declaration that “there is no distinction” relates not to infants and hardened transgressors, but to Jews and Gentiles. There is no distinction between them, *because, as he has previously proved, both classes have transgressed a known law.* The Gentiles have not broken the law of Moses, for they knew it not, and will not be judged by it. But they have violated “the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another, accusing or else excusing them.” It is because of this “lawlessness,” which is common to Jew and Gentile, that Paul declares that there is “no distinction, for that all have sinned.

A further proof that new-born infants were not under contemplation is furnished in the fact that he is dealing with the manner of God’s justifying grace, and that the only salvation indicated is one in which

infants can have no part. Men cannot be saved by the works of the law, he affirms ; and this would be an absurd remark to make in regard to new-born infants ! There is salvation "through faith in Jesus Christ," but in no other way can those of whom Paul writes attain salvation. Therefore we must either use our common sense, and say that Paul discussed only the case of real moral agents, *i.e.*, persons possessed of intelligence, conscience, volition, and sufficient knowledge to allow of choice between good and evil, or we must admit the awful inference that the children who die before attaining to an intelligent faith in Christ perish in what we choose to call their "sin."<sup>1</sup>

Looking more broadly at Paul's great argument, it will be found that his impeachment of the human race runs on lines which forbid the supposition that he wished to teach, or ever conceived the thought that the hereditary relation involves children in sin prior to their own sinful acts. Had he believed such a doctrine to be true, he could not have failed to display it in clear, unmistakable terms. Such a doctrine would at once have shown that all men are guilty before God, and the apostle would have needed no other proof. He would, however, have been compelled to deal, and to deal fully, with the ethical and magisterial difficulties which such a theory involves. He must have armed himself for the task of reconciling such a view with Ezekiel's proclamation to the contrary. He must have explained, also, how the propitiation

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 12.

of Christ took effect in the case of new-born infants and imbecile persons unconscious of personal guilt and incapable of discerning the significance of Christ's blood. Having done this, he would still have had upon his hands the task of explaining how this hereditary sin would be dealt with in the day of judgment. But Paul never mentioned, or implied, or left the least room for such hereditary guilt within the lines of his discussion of God's judgment. If he does not denounce the idea, it is evidently because he failed to anticipate its conception. But all that he does say about future judgment sheds a bright light on the mystery of Divine fairness in judging men of many nations, religions, and cultures by one man, Christ Jesus, and by the one infallible standard of their own conscious conformity or non-conformity to the light which was in them.

It must be repeated that the foregoing argument does not in the least degree conflict with an admission that transgression of the law by a moral agent does not cease to be sinful merely because unconscious. But the word unconscious must be jealously preserved from ambiguity. I use the word to mean what alone it can logically mean in a proposition which contains the words "moral agent." I do not use it to denote the movements, or feelings, or state of a being who is naturally incapable of ethical obedience or disobedience, because not awakened to moral conscious-

ness. Hence the admission that sin may, under certain conditions, be unconscious is not an admission that infants can possibly be regarded as sinful. The torpid state into which transgressors lapse through habitual misconduct is essentially sinful. The abiding attitude of the unscrupulous and disobedient is obnoxious to God, and deserves punishment. To deny or ignore this vital distinction between hardened offenders and new-born babes is to confound some of the worst symptoms of moral decay with the phenomena of undeveloped moral faculty. Infants are included under the category "moral agents," fallaciously because they are such only in a most rudimentary, and, indeed, in a merely potential sense. The utmost that can be predicated of them is that they are endowed with latent faculties which, under the normal conditions of life, health, and training, will subsequently constitute them responsible moral beings. Death sometimes carries them out of our sight into a state which we cannot depict, and is not referred to by Paul; but his doctrine of sin enables us to commit these little ones to Him who judges righteously. Sometimes sickness or accident impairs their faculties and renders them imbecile. Under extraordinary conditions they may grow up to be healthy animals, but devoid of any moral sentiments and ideas, because ignorant of God and without human associates to provide the conditions of relative duty. In such a bestial state, being without law they are also without sin; and their case presents

no analogy to that of the Jews and Gentiles of whom Paul said, "There is no distinction, for all have sinned."

A further mistake which needs to be guarded against is the supposition that the words "Divine law" in our definition imply that God's will arbitrarily determines the distinction between right and wrong. The use of the word "Divine" is not intended to convey such a meaning, nor can it fairly be so construed. We may, without presumption, say that God no more determines what is right by an act of volition as distinguishable from an act of judgment than He determines by an act of volition the necessary truths of Mathematics. Ethical duties necessarily arise with the existence of persons capable of influencing one another. The words "faithful Creator," "a just God," and many others of similar import warrant us in saying that the Scriptures recognise that creation itself involves responsibilities, even as human parentage involves duties. Without irreverence we may even venture to say that goodwill, providential care, and equitable government, and, whenever needful, remedial action, are as surely implied in the idea of Godhead as they are in the idea of earthly fatherhood. God is our judge, yet we must inevitably exercise our judgment on all professed representations of His character. The Scriptures recognise this truth, and they teem with appeals to men to pass judgment on God's acts, and to give honour

to His name as one worthy of all worship and praise.

In a corresponding way the possession of life and rational powers by created persons involves, of necessity, certain duties towards the author and the only true guide of life; and also towards all fellow creatures who are bound together by a common origin, common needs, and common possibilities of bane and blessing. These mutual duties of created persons may, and for some purposes must, be included in our duties to the Creator, viewed as the guardian of all His creatures. In this capacity it appertains to Him to exercise, and to require of His creatures that they also shall exercise, righteousness and lovingkindness in the earth. It is inconceivable that injustice, falsity, or any form of unkindness could ever be right in God; or that He could ever sanction it in those whom He has placed in social relations with one another. Hence, whatever a man does to his neighbour is done to his neighbour's God; and every misdeed which wrongs a man is a sin against the Creator and Guardian of men. On this account no definition of sin can be accurate which speaks vaguely of "law," and omits any reference to the Divine Lawgiver, King and Judge. A cup of cold water given to a fainting human brother is a service done to His Father in Heaven. A blow dealt to a human brother's flesh, or heart, is an offence against the guardian of his life and peace. Therefore, our definition specifies "Divine" law; not because the rule of righteous-



ness is subject to repeal or change, or could ever have been other than it is in this world, or elsewhere throughout the universe; but because God is the fountain of all moral light to created minds, and the supreme legislator and administrator of justice in His realm.

One other error must be guarded against, viz., a narrowing down of the word "Law" to denote a particular code, like that which is popularly and conveniently called the Mosaic law. Few mistakes have done more to becloud Christian theology than this failure to distinguish between the Law which is eternal and invariable as the character of God, and the law, or laws which from time to time have been reduced to verbal precepts, and, accompanied with penalties and promises. The great writers of the Old Testament rose to the height of their great theme, and saw that the chief function of statute law is that of enlightening men's eyes to discern good and evil, and to appreciate distinctions between good and better, better and best. They saw that the essence of all law lies in the simple demand that a man shall do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with His God. Statute law taught the ignorant, and reminded the careless, that certain forms of conduct were unjust and unloving, and that no conduct would satisfy the Creator which ignored and dishonoured Himself. For the hardness of men's hearts, and to meet the necessities of civil government, a code with penalties attached was indis-

pensable ; but the code was only a transient enactment which might at any time be repealed without in the least degree affecting the eternal and absolute law which is identical with God's will, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. National pride and religious formalism led the Jews to identify their written law with the universal and everlasting will of God. Paul laboured to prove to them that this was an utter delusion, and he not obscurely hints that Moses would have been wiser, and even more candid, if he had explained to the people the merely transient usefulness of his legal dispensation.<sup>1</sup> In Paul's usage of the word law the distinction between temporary, provisional statutes, and eternal principles of righteousness is carefully preserved, and he sets before us a wide, and truly scientific view of this great theme. He recognises that eternal principles need to be revealed to created minds, and that no law can be obligatory to the conscience unless it has in some way been communicated. But he also enables us to see that directly the revelation has been received, a sense of duty is awakened, and moral responsibility begins. According to this profound teaching, the method of communication is a non-essential detail. In whatever way, and through whatever channels, however devious and intricate, the knowledge has come, it corresponds with the faculty of moral judgment, and sets in active play the forces of that inward tribunal which we call conscience. This knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Cf., 2 Cor. iii, iv, 1-10. (Revised version.)

may come through external agencies, or may be written in man's mind as by the Creator's finger ; it may be dim or clear, complete or fragmentary, but the one essential fact is that it is there, as at least a gleam of inward light, and is operating, as all light does, to open the sleeper's eye. Thus the Divine law includes all possible instruction in righteousness. It finds partial expression even in the teachings of heathen philosophers, lawgivers, and founders of religion, such as Confucius, Gautama, Manu, Mohammed, Socrates, Plato, Zeno, and Marcus Aurelius. Whatever enlightens conscience, and reveals the beauty and obligation of righteousness, proceeds originally from the source of all light in God, and adds to the responsibility of those into whose minds it shines, none the less because its source has been forgotten.

It follows from this equitable principle that the duties which man can justly be required to render to God must correspond to God's real or supposed character and disposition. God does not, and could not justly demand from the benighted heathen what He claims from those who have received the revelation of Himself in Christ. Such a God as the imaginary Zeus of the Greeks, or the Moloch of the Phoenicians, could not be thought of as desiring, and much less as deserving such regards as were claimed by Jehovah. A just and merciful God righteously asks for reverence and trust. A gracious God righteously looks for love. A merciful God may justly

call upon the wicked to repent. But no moral being could be forced to think that it was his duty to trust a fickle God, or to revere an unjust God, or to love a being who is manifestly cruel, ruthless, or utterly indifferent to the welfare of the creatures He has made. Here again therefore we have a principle clearly scriptural, and as clearly rational and right, which provides for the equitable judgment of men whose religious training has imbued their minds with degraded and degrading conceptions of the Power reigning over the world.

A most important application of this principle requires to be stated, viz.: that it permits, and indeed compels us to recognise that some actions which objectively are contrary to God's will, and evil in their effects, may be altogether sinless; and that some acts which are not in themselves contrary to His will, and are naturally harmless, or even beneficial, may be sinful in the sight of God.

As an illustration of the former half of this statement we may take Paul's persecution of the Christian church. It cannot be affirmed that this was absolutely blameless, but in the main it was the outcome of a mistaken sense of duty. It is probable that the persecutor's zeal was tinged with elements of national jealousy and pride. Possibly some personal antipathies were secretly at work helping to becloud his vision, and obstruct the rays of Christian light. But allowing for all these things, it is true that, before his encounter with Jesus on the

Damascus road, Paul verily thought that he ought to root out the Galilean sect. Reviewing his career some thirty years later, and writing in the clear daylight of advanced Christian experience, the apostle solemnly declared that in persecuting the Church he had done what he then believed to be his duty. He could not, and did not profess that his motives were immaculate, but he verily believed that he was doing God service. In so acting, Paul, the zealous persecutor, was a better man than he would have been, if while believing the Church to be a cancerous growth, he had turned aside and left the task of eradication to others. That his activity was in itself a war against God is indisputable, but it is equally certain that in his heart and soul he was loyally fighting under God's own banner. What he needed, therefore, was not punishment, but revelation, and for this cause he received that light which augmented and redirected his zeal for God's Kingdom. His conduct was mischievous in its effects, but it was neither disobedient in spirit nor harmful in its intent, and subjectively it was not only right, but sacredly incumbent upon him until Divinely taught to labour for the building up of the Church he had endeavoured to destroy.

A more complete and more abstract view of this principle is furnished by Paul in his handling of the question whether Christians might eat meat which had been offered to idols. His great canon of judgment is that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, *i.e.*, whatever is done by a man

who feels sure, or even suspects, that it is wrong, is culpable ("He that doubteth is condemned if he eat"), although the same act done by another who believes it to be right, incurs no condemnation, and is not sin. It is, therefore, an apostolic doctrine that conscience is not an infallible guide to action, but is a faculty of the mind which judges our conformity, or non-conformity to whatever standard of duty we inwardly acknowledge. The standard may be erroneous, but conformity to the standard thought right is obligatory, and disloyalty to any sincere conception of duty is a sin. It is thus made clear that external conformity to God's law may sometimes be sin, while external non-conformity may sometimes be sinless; and where no applicable rule of life is known, and conscience has no scope for activity, there can be neither ethical obedience nor disobedience, and consequently there is no sin.

These elucidations warrant us in saying that sin in the sense affixed to the word by our definition presupposes the existence of a moral agent, the existence, not only of a supreme potentate, but of a holy, righteous, and loving Lawgiver, whose will is the supreme fountain of authority in the universe, and the only infallible guide to what is right. The word sin also presupposes that this Being has furnished His creatures with at least some partial revelation of His will, and that by their conformity to the revelation afforded them, and by this alone, they will be judged.

Subtle questions might here be raised in regard to

the adequacy of the moral light which some men possess, and the inequality of privilege observable in the world. But however interesting and important these inquiries may be in themselves, they do not require discussion in this place. Having once decided that men will be held responsible for their actions only to the measure of their actual illumination, or to the measure of the light which they might, and could, and therefore should have received, we have cleared away every ground of fear that there will be any unfairness in the Divine judgments. More than this, we have established the principle which Paul impressed upon the Jews, and which Christ had long before proclaimed with clarion voice of warning, viz., that higher privilege, unless well used, must issue in deeper abasement; and that the clearer the light which shines from heaven upon the path of duty, the more extreme the guilt of those who forsake that path, and the more intolerable the sting of conscience when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

The definition thus elucidated requires us to believe that God will recognise a large amount of evil in the world which cannot be included under the category of sin, and therefore cannot in justice be either punished or forgiven. To many this effect of the definition is its ethical verification, and a source of strength to their religious faith; but theologians of many schools have viewed it with alarm, and have failed, or refused to consistently maintain the

distinction. It is remarkable that this reluctance is peculiar to theology. The most rigorous Augustinians betray no difficulty in drawing what is a plain ethical distinction except when discussing human nature in its Godward relations. In the common judgments of daily life, and in awarding praise or blame to historical characters, to contemporary public men, or to friends and neighbours, it is freely made by all who have a regard for justice. Ethical writers of all schools maintain this distinction, and official judges allow it to modify the penalties they impose, although for obvious reasons State-tribunals are compelled to condemn all objective breaches of law. It is God, and God alone, who can perfectly apply such a principle of judgment since He alone can unfailingly discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, and weigh all actions in flawless moral scales. Yet strange to say it is God, and God alone, who is theoretically declared to be so holy that He must needs set aside this equitable principle when trying the conduct and determining the destiny of men!

As my object is not merely to vindicate a definition of sin, but to sustain, or, if needful, to induce that faith in God which it encourages, I venture to offer a few observations on the origin of the anomalous fact just pointed out. By many critics the theological confounding of things which differ has been attributed to harshness of spirit, to bigotry, and even to obliquity of moral vision, and



this has given the assailants of Christianity an objective for their sarcasm and disdain. But such a censorious judgment has seldom been deserved. It would be far truer to say that the anxiety of so many Christian thinkers to charge humanity with guiltiness on account of much that is rather our misfortune than our fault, has sprung from, and still owes its persistence to, a profound appreciation of the Divine holiness, and of man's real depravity, which less religious and less intensely earnest minds have neither felt nor understood. Men who have looked at their own sin and the sin of the world in the light of God's countenance lose all desire to excuse or palliate even the least of all their faults and errors. They are rightly afraid of a self-defensive attitude, and are so filled with shame that alike in confession and admonition, they use strong unqualified terms, and have no disposition to indulge in nice distinctions for the abatement of contrition before God. Out of these feelings have come the burning words of psalmists and prophets, and of humble saints in all ages, and theologians have erred chiefly in hardening these outbursts of confession and self-denunciation into cold scientific dogmas.

This error is unspeakably serious, but I desire to speak with respectful sympathy to those who fear to commit a more deadly mistake by laying it aside. When we carry the phenomena of moral life out of the region of social ethics, and away from the bar of human judgment, to view them in the light of

God's countenance, their objective differences become much less clearly marked, although the distinction itself involves so much more serious consequences. Viewed in the white sunlight which brings to view so many stains and spots which escape detection in the dim lamplight of human judgment, moral states and acts of an absolutely sinless quality, are rarely, if ever to be discovered. In what are called "sins of ignorance" some vitiating element may usually be detected, and when not detected, the confessional language of good men, and our own self-knowledge almost compel us to suspect its presence, not only in sins of ignorance, but also in the noblest acts of righteousness ever achieved, and in the highest states of holiness ever attained by others or by ourselves. Deeply religious men always share Paul's thought that even when they know nothing against themselves they are not warranted in deeming themselves blameless. Like the psalmist they recognise the possible presence of errors, which they necessarily fail to understand (for if understood they would cease to be errors), and also the presence below or within these errors of something sinful—"secret faults"—not merely sins hidden from the prying eyes of fellow men, but sins hidden from self-knowledge, and visible only to the Divine Searcher of hearts. No human analysis is fine enough to separate these elements of blameless error or infirmity from culpable ignorance, or from the astute workings of a self-pleasing spirit; and no self-examination can be keen enough to

certify that what we think the pure gold of noble motive, will not be found to contain some alloy of subtle sin, when assayed in the great refiner's fire.

These familiar facts go far to explain the reluctance of many theologians to admit that the distinction between evil and sin is valid before God ; while they habitually make allowance for an analogous difference when judging their fellow-men. They regard our distinction as useless and dangerous, even if true, because belonging rather to the realm of abstract thought than to the region of common fact with which the exponents of religion have to deal. Hence they are so anxious to foster a wholesome spirit of humility and self-distrust before God that they read the severest meanings in the language of Scripture, and strain its doctrine of man's position before the bar of God.

It is only just to speak respectfully of scruples which spring from so honourable a source. We may also allow them to caution us against all attempts to justify ourselves, or to preach a false peace to our neighbours. Unable to pierce the veil which hides each human soul from direct scrutiny, it is our wisdom and duty to refrain from judging one another, and until we have cleansed our own hearts perfectly we are ill-fitted to condemn, and even to discern the subtleties of motive and spirit which God regards. But when man bows before God it is alike his duty and his interest, not only to lay bare the inmost secrets of consciousness, but also to invoke a Divine searching of the dark depths

below self-knowledge. If sin is to be cured it must be seen by the Great Physician, and if it is to be forgiven it must be confessed. It is on this account that godly men instinctively dread the detestable and almost suicidal attitude of self-defence before God. Hence it inevitably follows that a disposition which every wise and good man ought to cultivate is also one which theologians and preachers most properly seek to encourage.

There is nothing new or strange in this lesson, but it is one which cannot be too strenuously urged. Looking back on the history of ethical theism we see that it has been one of the most vital elements of religious education. It is one which the Hebrew ceremonial law was manifestly designed to teach. By this law no atonement was allowed for wilful sins (except in four notable cases, which serve to render the rule more evident),<sup>1</sup> but it was stringently required on account of sins of ignorance. The law thus vividly taught the people that even their errors and unconscious departures from the right were mixed up with faultiness. Christ, whose teachings and example constitute a higher law than even the finger of God could write on stones or parchments, continually impressed the truth that God looks more to the inner life of thought and feeling than to the outer life of multitudinous acts, and He who needed no repentance has taught His disciples to pray always for forgiveness and to avoid the Pharisaic attitude of self-justification before God. It is not without reason,

<sup>1</sup> *Cf.* p. 452.

therefore, that Christian teachers are more anxious to promote a spirit of humble self-distrust than to palliate defects. They rightly feel that however indefinite in its nature, and however small the sinful element may be, it is precisely this element which most urgently demands remembrance and confession before Him who meets men only at the Mercy Seat. It must always be a chief business, therefore, of applied or pastoral theology to bring this sinful element to light as a needful preparation for repentance and a subsequent remission of sins.

All this must be cordially acknowledged, but it supplies no reason for any timid reticence about the theoretical distinction between evil and sin. We may fear to deceive ourselves by finding excuses for defective life, and may fear to become prophets of smooth falsities by furnishing our fellow-men with a distinction which may be transmuted into a narcotic poison for their consciences. But we need never fear that any ill-effect will flow from a doctrine which teaches every man to repose a perfect faith in the Judge of all the earth. It can harm no man, and may save multitudes from rebellion and distrust to believe that God, with infinite magnanimity, unflinching vision, and unerring wisdom, does perfectly what we so sadly fail to do aright. Only when quite sure that He will be divinely fair and true can we dare to say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

### III. *The Consequences of Sin.*

We have now to consider those consequences of sin which complicate the work of saving sinners while overcoming sin itself. These consequences may conveniently be grouped under four heads, as Physical, Intellectual, Moral, and Circumstantial.

1. The Physical consequences of sin. These would at first be exceedingly slight and possibly imperceptible, but some bodily alteration would certainly follow any act of transgression. Any struggle betwixt inclination and judgment which issues in a surrender of judgment must impair the delicate organism through which the mind effects its purposes and acts upon and receives impressions from the outer world. It must at least affect the precision and promptitude with which thought is translated into action by the body, and the tendency of all surrender to inclination, as against a mental perception of wisdom or duty, must be to render what Paul calls the "members" less amenable to the directive control of the mind. Thus the physical effects of transgression co-operate with moral deterioration in bringing about the state of things described in Rom. vii. The ultimate sense of impotence to effectuate mental resolves is due chiefly to a weakening of the moral nature, but in part also to cumulative physiological defects either organic or functional. Every time the mind fails to enforce its behests on the body there must be some increase of

irrational or immoral independence of the lower part of man's nature, until at last the mind may sit within—as a discrowned king—thinking, judging, blaming, and regretting the insurrection of the members, but tending more and more to become a spectator rather than the author of the acts it vainly wishes to prevent. In this way what Paul calls the “flesh” wars against the mind and becomes more and more automatic in its actions, *i.e.*, it lives an animal life which the judgment and conscience do less and less to impel or restrain. The exact degree to which this moral impotence is traceable to strictly physical effects of transgression on the part of the individual or of his progenitors need not be discussed, and cannot be scientifically determined. Many to-day would explain all the phenomena as physical, while others would refuse to recognise physical defects as distinct from moral depravity. But avoiding both these extremes as erroneous, we must be content to affirm that man's body is, according to an ancient simile, like a harp on which the mind plays, and when the music is bad the explanation is not merely that the harpist is unskilled, or careless, or perverse, but also that the strings are overstrained or slack.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of heredity is still in an unsettled state, and it is impossible to estimate with scientific precision and certitude the extent to which these physical effects of sin are transmitted from generation to generation, or to state the precise law under which they become magnified and complicated. But

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 13.

our present purpose only requires us to recognise two principles, viz.: (1) That to whatever extent these consequences are transmitted by necessary physical causation they are outside the region of ethics, and are injuries suffered, not moral acts or states for which the sufferer is responsible and blameworthy; (2) that however these consequences may differ in individuals in degree and kind, they must be allowed for as present to some extent in all men. Acquired habits are probably not hereditary, but degeneration of bodily health certainly is, and it leads to practically the same results. Lowered vitality under similar conditions renders men liable to similar diseases, and predisposes them to yield to similar temptations. How much impaired health works against contentment, disturbs the balance of reason and desire, and produces morbid, morose, passionate, or apathetic dispositions it is impossible to estimate; but certainly it renders a sober, cheerful, kindly, and righteous life more difficult, and to this extent it must appeal to the compassion rather than excite the wrath of God.

We are not now dealing with the problem of Divine goodness in relation to the prevalence of pain, disease, and death, and are not called upon therefore, to discuss the question whether these physical evils are *entirely* caused by human sin. I have discussed this problem elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and have pointed out that, although pain and mortality prevailed on the earth for immeasurable periods before

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "The Mystery of God," chap. v.



the advent of man, this fact does not disprove or even militate against the doctrine that human sin is the final cause of all terrestrial suffering. But whatever may be thought of this contention, it will not be disputed that an enormous proportion of the agonising wounds and sicknesses which scourge mankind are the direct or indirect consequences of transgression. With respect to death, opinions will differ. Some may regard it as a natural change, which in some form must have been experienced; others will persist in regarding it as in every case the penalty of sin; others may consider it a consequence of sin, but not its penalty, seeing that those to whom there is now "no condemnation" are allowed to die. Those who take this view may further insist that physical death is God's physical remedy for the physical defects produced by sin.<sup>1</sup> But few, if any, will call in question the apostle's words, "The sting of death is sin." The dismay which death inspires is partly due to its physical accompaniments before and after the transitional moment, partly to our natural aversion to separation from persons that are dear and places that are at least familiar, together with our dread of entering into an unknown and unimaginable environment. But keener than all these feelings, and lending a new terror to them all, is the premonition of judgment which arises from a consciousness of ill-desert. Man everywhere regards death as his last enemy. As we behold the springing up and withering of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 428.

generations, and foresee the speedy decline and disappearance of all who live around us to-day; as we watch the throes of dissolution which wrench beloved ones from our enclasping hands, and wonderingly ask by what means and with what sufferings we shall be required to pass, it is natural to feel fear, distrust, rebellion, and an oscillation of mind between cringing and defiance as we think of Him who has appointed unto all men once to die. Christian faith triumphs over all these feelings, but the natural effect of death is to alienate men's hearts from the ruler of the world as an adversary to be feared, rather than a Father to be trusted and loved.

2. The Intellectual consequences of sin. For the practical purposes of this inquiry it would be idle to discuss the more subtle psychological questions which suggest themselves in this connection. That sin has wrought mental aberration in millions of cases is quite obvious. Vice does not spare the brain, and thus the physical and intellectual are inseparably related, and the sins of remote ancestors working in the nerves of their posterity naturally tend to derange thought and disorder conduct. But the most significant fact which claims our notice is that sin naturally and inevitably becomes a prolific source of intellectual error. Here, as elsewhere, the law holds good that all fruit is seed. Sin is in itself the outcome and evidence of some prior intellectual confusion and mistake, but it is also true that it tends to produce further errors, and

particularly errors of the deadliest kind, viz., those which constitute personal misjudgment, and consequently interfere with peaceful and happy relations. Free and happy intercourse between persons being once interrupted by injurious acts and thoughts, the mind is left an easy prey to further misunderstandings. Thus the separating gulf widens, and explanations and reconciliation become increasingly difficult, even when earnestly desired and sought by one of the divided parties. As ignorance becomes denser, an evil imagination supplies the lack of knowledge. The slightest and most hesitating doubt will, unless banished, become the parent of many doubts, and if estrangement does not lead to a total cessation of all relations, it naturally develops into positive dislike and enmity, at any rate on the side of the wrongdoer. Thus, according to the Biblical history of sin, the same feelings which lead men to avoid their fellows when offended or conscious of having given offence operated to sever man from God. The foolishness of man perverted his ways and his heart fretted against the Almighty. Suspecting, fearing, and detesting the Supreme Being as they conceived Him, men did not like to retain God in their thoughts. Ceasing to think of God was equivalent to His dethronement and banishment from the conscious inner life; and thus, according to Paul, the way was opened for man's descent into the abyss of godlessness.

But even here the mischief could not terminate

Man is essentially and persistently religious. He might lose every worthy conception of the true God, but he could not stifle all those thoughts and feelings of dependence and of subjection to authority, or those anticipations of judgment which belong to him as a being created for rational relations with God. Hence the solitude of godless souls becomes haunted by terrible spectres. Voltaire once said that even if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent one to keep mankind in order. But he might have gone deeper than this, and said that, even when men have denied God, they are driven by an inexorable necessity of their being to conceive some higher powers peopling their unseen environment, and to believe in some objective causality to account for those mysterious movements of thought and feeling of which they are conscious, but which they did not willingly originate, and would gladly allay, yet totally fail to control. Imagination touched by upward yearning and a sense of personal guilt cannot long refrain from the work of personifying natural and supernatural forces. It works not only in waking hours, but often with intenser activity in unrestful sleep. Hence came vague impressions of besetting spirits and superhuman friends and foes corresponding to man's desires or fears, which afterwards reacted upon both, and by degrees took shape in gods and goddesses. Hence all the horrors and monstrosities of pagan mythology; the awful tyranny of priesthoods which pretend to mediate

between scared human minds and the superhuman objects of their dread ; hence also those foul rites of worship which have sanctified every conceivable abuse of human nature to propitiate imaginary gods. The evolution of heathendom with all its foulness and folly may be partially explained by that "Ghost Theory" which has been propounded as an historical account of the origin of all religion. This theory is only a superficial impertinence when offered as the genesis of theism ; but it is a fragmentary truth when given as an explanation of the process by which many concrete religions have taken form and been developed. It is chiefly important because of the undesigned corroboration it affords to the natural history of paganism propounded in the Scriptures, and because it betrays at least a feeble perception of the principle that, given the historical conditions which are affirmed in Scripture, the evolution of heathendom along the lines of Paul's review was an absolutely inevitable consequence of man's estrangement from God. The tendencies which have gradually produced the full-grown upas trees under whose baleful shadow many nations pine are so strong and subtle that, apart from the presence and activity of a worthy theistic faith, we may boldly affirm that the modern world, notwithstanding all its science and culture, would within no great period of time reel back into the same bestial condition as that into which the ancient world had sunk before the Christian era.

This law of religious degeneration represents the most universal effect of sin on the human mind, and, in comparison with this, individual errors and mental derangement through physical transgression become almost insignificant phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Moral consequences of sin. At first sight it might appear that these consequences demand more careful and prolonged discussion than any others, and, according to some theorists, they form the sole subject for consideration. On further reflection, however, it will be perceived that the supreme question at issue has already been decided by our definition of sin, and by our subsequent conclusion that sin has produced some consequences, for which each sufferer should be pitied rather than blamed. Having fully committed ourselves to a distinction which excludes necessary causation from the realm of morals, we are forbidden to impeach the human race as guilty before God of the wounds it suffers. We have recognised, moreover, that the distinction we have drawn is one which can be perfectly applied only by Him to whom all things are naked and open, by whom alone actions can be weighed and moral states discerned. Hence it would be unprofitable to attempt an analysis of human nature with a view to ascertain the precise extent to which a man's actions and states are predetermined by the operation of natural causes, and to what extent he acts and makes his own character

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 14.

as a free volitional being. In these two important respects a discussion of the moral consequences of sin has been foreclosed ; but a few observations may be offered to clear away some ancient and persistent misunderstandings which prejudice the minds of many.

From the earliest days of Christianity it has been seen by men of spiritual experience that appreciation of God's grace, and particularly of His grace in sending His Son into the world to be our Saviour, must always bear some proportion to our estimate of the malignity of the moral disease which threatens mankind with ruin and death. All attempts to make light of sin, to extenuate man's guilt, and to take sanguine views of his power to purify and elevate himself by independent efforts have been resented as direct or indirect attempts to detract from the grace of God, and to diminish the value of the Incarnation and Atonement. This feeling was never expressed with more intensity or power than by Augustine in his controversy with Pelagius, and it was this religious sentiment rather than the force of logic which gave prevalence to his views, and has invested his name with sanctity to multitudes who detest some of the opinions and practices which he did so much to establish in the Latin Church. This old-world controversy can never lose its interest for Christian students, and though many consider that it should be consigned to oblivion, I am disposed to think that a brief glance at its course may serve to clarify our judgments ; while

even its antiquity may assist impartiality, and distance favour large and comprehensive views.

The chief issue raised by Pelagius was the validity of the distinction between the consequences of sin which men suffer as passive victims of ancestral sin, and the wrongful acts or states which they commit or tolerate in themselves after attaining the knowledge of good and evil. Unfortunately, this issue was not fairly fought out, and was almost entirely lost sight of amid the dust and din of personalities, the discussion of particular but often non-essential phrases, and loud complaints and shrill reproaches for real or supposed untruthfulness and craft.

Pelagius was not primarily a speculative theologian but a moral reformer. He was appalled by the wickedness which he saw rampant in Rome, not only among the laity but in the ranks of the clergy, and he found his expostulations and appeals frustrated by replies based upon Augustine's doctrine of human inability and the correlative doctrine of arbitrary, dynamical grace. Confronted with this theological *non possumus*, Pelagius laboured to break down what he regarded as a bulwark of iniquity, and concentrated his efforts on the task of enforcing a recognition of human accountability. In order to achieve this purpose, it was requisite for him to show that however disastrous the consequences of Adam's sin might be, man still retained some moral power to comply with God's commands and to respond to His messages of mercy and promises of



help. Not unnaturally, but most unfortunately for himself and his cause as a reformer of the Church, Pelagius fell into the common controversial fault of denying and affirming too much. In his anxiety to emphasise the necessary conditions of moral responsibility he shut his eyes to many of the worst consequences of ancestral sin, and admitted little more than the prejudicial effects of evil example and tuition. Smitten and perplexed by his antagonist, he was driven into extreme positions, which were the logical issue of ill-considered statements but were by no means indispensable to his argument. To make matters worse, and for the further confusion of the debate, Augustine put the most extreme and unfavourable construction upon his language, and absolutely refused to recognise some of his most vital distinctions.

It would involve a long *excursus* to exhibit all the facts which justify this statement, but one of them demands our keenest attention. Pelagius wrote that "nothing good and nothing evil *for which we are deemed either laudable or blameworthy is born with us.*" The meaning of this is perfectly clear, and its ethical soundness as well as its Christian orthodoxy may be fearlessly maintained. Of course it was not Augustinian doctrine, and was fairly open to assault; but Augustine evaded the issue. He did not offer reasons or Scriptural authorities for affirming that a new-born child can righteously be blamed for being what it is when ushered into the world, but charged Pelagius with teaching that "Adam's

sin *hurt only himself.*" When Pelagius resented this charge and reaffirmed his proposition Augustine scouted the distinction drawn between injury and culpability. He charged Pelagius with "mendacity and deception" and with making "fraudulent and crafty excuses," and insisted that the words just cited constituted an assertion that man has received "no wound, in short, inflicted by an enemy."<sup>1</sup>

It must be admitted that Pelagius had used language which justified Augustine in charging him with an exaggerated estimate of the healthy condition in which children are born. He did not acknowledge, and probably no one in his age was capable of seeing, much less appreciating, the importance of those facts which modern science has thrust into prominence. I have no interest in the defence or censure of either combatant, and simply desire to bring out the fact that the crucial question, Is man morally responsible for passive injuries? was lost sight of, partly through a real or supposed denial on one side that any injuries were suffered, and partly by a persistent refusal on the other side to recognise a distinction between wounds "inflicted by an enemy" and evil for which we are deemed blameworthy.

It is instructive to recall the fact that Augustine, prior to the Pelagian controversy, saw and used this distinction in his denunciation of the Manichæans. These people asserted that God had surrendered men to become the perpetrators of

<sup>1</sup> Augustine on Grace and Original Sin. Bk. ii. caps. xi-xiv.

inevitable sin, and that on account of this sin He condemned them to eternal darkness. Against this doctrine Augustine launched his thunderbolts, declaring that such a surrender of helpless creatures to unavoidable sin would itself be sinful, and that to punish these souls for the sin to which He gave them up by consigning them to a position in which it was inevitable, would be still more wicked. He declared that a God who could so act should, instead of setting up as a Judge, "confess Himself a criminal" for "condemning those *whom he knows to have suffered evil rather than done it . . . .* first giving them up to incurable contamination, and then, as if that were not enough, accusing them falsely of misconduct." To this he added the pregnant sentence, "These souls, therefore, did no evil themselves, but in all this were innocent sufferers. The real agent was He who sent them away from Himself into this wretchedness."<sup>1</sup>

No language could more forcibly exhibit the justice of the distinction I am anxious to enforce than this generous outburst of indignation. It sets in the clearest possible light the vital principle which was not only lost sight of during the Pelagian controversy, while polemical passions burned, but was obscured for many generations by the false issues which, having once been raised, were perpetuated by sectarian divisions. We can scarcely be too generous in making allowance for the errors which sprang up on each side from a perverted zeal for godliness; but we must

<sup>1</sup> Reply to Faustus. Bk. xxii. cap. 22.

deplore the fact that while Pelagius either denied or explained away some of the darkest and saddest phenomena of human nature and experience, Augustine exaggerated these facts and gave them a false ethical interpretation. The attitude of the one was like that of a certain enthusiast who should declare to the patients lying prostrate in a hospital that they could arise and fulfil the duties of healthy life if they chose. The attitude of the other was like that of a physician who should inform his patients that it was their own fault that they were stricken by the plague; that because of their disease they deserved to be burned, and could in nowise assist their own cure, even by asking for or accepting a prescribed and provided remedy. In each case the power of appeal to man's conscience was impaired:—in the one case, because men knew that they were weaker and in a worse moral plight than Pelagius allowed; in the other case, because men resented gross injustice, and made their moral impotence an excuse for disobedience to the Divine voice, which bade them stretch forth their palsied limbs and follow Him who offered health. Augustine triumphed because, in spite of his erroneous interpretation, plain men were able to verify at least the general correspondence of his views to some of the most humiliating facts of history and observation, and were conscious alike of their own infirmities and of the awful force of evil in the world. Sincere men who had striven after righteousness and failed to do the good they honestly attempted found

the statements of Pelagius untrue to their experience. Insincere men who had no desire to fight the good fight repudiated his views as too stern and condemnatory, and preferred to take refuge from the reformer's censures and from self-reproach in the theological explanation of Augustine. Christian parents who mourned the defects of their children put away the Pelagian picture of infancy as ideal. Sainly men who had made great advances in holiness and knew that without inspiration and strength from Christ they would have remained in trespasses and sin, thankfully learned from Augustine to trace all their attainments to Divine grace, and to disclaim all merit and glory for themselves. Thus from the most diversified classes of men Augustine found support and acquiescence upon the ground of experience, and those who acknowledged the soundness of his facts were naturally predisposed to accept his doctrinal explanations without subjecting them to severe critical examination. For all that was true, strong and reverent in Augustine's teachings the Church has great reason to be thankful. But we can scarcely lament too bitterly that he refused to recognise consistently the distinction between injury suffered and wrong done; between man as the passive victim of ancestral sin, and man as a moral agent who repeats the transgressions of his fathers, and brings upon himself the worst of all sufferings in the torment of a gnawing worm and the burning flame of conscious guilt. Centuries of theological and philosophical debate, supplemented

by the scientific investigations of recent years, have placed the once disputed facts before us in the clearest possible light ; and it may be hoped that in no distant day the theological interpretation of these facts will coincide with Augustine's earlier views and therein accord with the teachings of Scripture and of ethical science, and with the moral intuitions of common men.<sup>1</sup>

4. The Circumstantial effects of sin. The most important factor in a man's earthly environment is man. The subjective effects of sin on the individual being multiplied by the number of men who suffer them, produces a world which is full of influences adverse to faith and righteousness. The sins and follies of ages have evolved political and social conditions which seem to contradict the thought of a Divine Order and defy all efforts to unravel the tangled web. Our ears are daily assailed with wails of piteous lamentation, with shrieks of horror, and fierce denunciations of cruelty, heartlessness, and lust. Were the tragedies enacting in a single city uncovered to any gazer, the sight would stupefy or madden. Even our present superficial knowledge of the circumstances in the midst of which millions pass their days would probably madden us, were it not for the benumbing influence of familiarity, and the merciful law which ever tends to make the realities we have seen become shadowy and unreal as soon as they pass from sight. It would

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 15.

serve no good end to load these pages with ghastly and loathsome particulars. In some measure they are known to all, and at some time they smite every thoughtful mind.

It is not merely true, as Pelagius confessed, that as intelligence awakens, children are exposed to the pernicious influence of evil example ; but the wrongs which they behold are full of appalling suggestions to the mind, and fraught with evil provocations to the heart. Speaking of an approaching crisis, our Lord foretold that because iniquity would abound the love of many would wax cold, and His words direct us to the worst effect of an evil environment. The prevalence of iniquity deprives each heart of that nourishing and refining stream of social influence which in a city of God would develop love and good works, as fruitful trees are nourished by a river. Not only is this "river of God" depleted of its waters, but foul streams take their place. Evil example may sometimes act as a deterrent because of some repulsive features or shocking consequences, but even in its most hideous forms it tends to propagate itself by the provocation of anger, revenge, or other destructive passion, and when it wears a garb of pleasantness it not only allures to imitation, but fascinates and attracts to some responsive fellowship in sin. Nor is this the utmost limit of its noxious influence, for while alluring or aggravating to sin it is full of sinister significance, and renders faith in God's wisdom and goodness impossible in the absence of some

assurance which enables the heart to trust the Almighty Ruler while the intellect fails to understand His ways. Even those who have most faith in God are often staggered and afraid, so that, like Jeremiah, they exclaim, "Righteous art Thou O Lord when I plead with thee—yet let me reason the case with Thee" (Jer. xii. 1). Thus in many ways, of which these thoughts are but hinted reminders, the presence and prevalence of the sin which historically flows down from the obscure commencement of moral life on earth militates against that kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit of God.

It can scarcely escape attention that the classification of these effects of sin under the words physical, intellectual, moral, and circumstantial is somewhat arbitrary, and that no such separation can be observed in the objective world of reality. We may sort and label the phenomena thus for the sake of mental clearness, but even while engaged in the attempt to describe them separately we find them interlacing and recombining in defiance of logical analysis. For speculative minds there might be great interest in an endeavour to trace their mutual relations, and to think out the laws of their interaction. Such an inquiry would also have great practical value if successfully prosecuted, because it would tend to clear away many obscurities and to correct several mistakes which lie near the roots of great and calamitous corruptions of



religious thought and life. But, valuable as such an inquiry might be, it only falls within my province to indicate a few of the phenomena it would have to deal with, and to do this only so far as may serve to give increased clearness and force to the vital distinction between those consequences of sin which belong to the region of necessary causality, and those which belong to the higher realm of free volitional life in which the terms "cause" and "effect" have no rational application in their strict scientific sense.

A prolific source of error lies in the tendency to attach an exaggerated importance to one class of phenomena as compared with the others, and even to treat one as if it alone were vitally significant. Thus an undue attention to the physical side of man's nature has been connected with an almost materialistic conception of sin. Orientalism, with its false ideals of purity, very early crept into the Christian Church, inducing a Docetic Christology and substituting ascetic ordinances for the Gospel as the remedy of sin. Hence came the dishonouring of marriage and childbearing, and the polluting doctrine which stigmatised the natural desires of the flesh as sinful. Hence, celibate orders and all the attendant evils of withdrawal from wholesome family life, and the inevitable reaction in outbursts of licentiousness. Hence also, the sullyng of comparatively innocent minds by the prurient questions of the Confessional, and the consequent creation of a false conscience, which has marred the sanctity of married life for millions.

A striking feature of modern thought is the tendency to find the cause of immorality in physical conditions, and to substitute hygiene for the Gospel, and sanitation for Sanctification.

A similar exaggeration of the intellectual element found all man's defect in the lack of knowledge, treated fleshly sins as harmless, and exalted gnosis as the one thing needful for salvation. The essential fault of ancient Gnosticism has often reappeared. It did much to undo the benefits of the Protestant Reformation by reducing the doctrine of Justification by Faith to a demand for mere intellectual assent, and by the elevating of orthodox opinion to a test of fitness for church membership.

By an exaggerated account of the ruinous effects of sin on man's moral nature, moral responsibility was practically undermined. The doctrine of Original Sin has tended to sap belief in God's Justice and to reduce men to despondent helplessness by stamping the word guilt even on attempts to pray, and discouraging endeavours after righteousness as not only vain but sinful.

So, also, much evil has come from a too exclusive consideration of man's environment. This has fostered a fatalistic sense of impotence in the individual; and has directed remedial efforts too exclusively towards an external readjustment of society and the removal of unfavourable conditions; because engendering a hopeless and impatient distrust of the Christian method which works towards the transformation of society by the salva-

tion of individuals from sin. As one result of this prevalent mistake many have been taught to rail at their circumstances where they should have blamed their own misdeeds and folly, and have learned to pity themselves as the victims of other men's iniquities where they should have blamed themselves as sinners.

The only safeguard against all these mischievous mistakes is to recognise that the various consequences of sin are intermixed in a manner which defies human diagnosis, although there is one clear moral principle by which the judgment of God will be determined—a principle which is also perfectly clear to our moral judgment, although its judicial application is outside our province and utterly beyond our power.

All physical and some intellectual consequences of sin fall within the region in which the law of necessary causation is supreme. Physical injuries are physically caused, and neither volition nor desire can sever the effect from the cause. Yet in many cases the immediate cause is set in motion by the action of the individual who suffers the effect, and his action may be due to intellectual error, and this, again, may be traceable to a subtle moral bias, to some conscious defiance or neglect of known law, or to the deceptive character of his environment. In other cases the physical effect is due to the act of a second person, so that the sufferer is a passive victim. Yet again, the act of the injurious person may be occasioned though not caused by some prior pro-

vocation such as a blow or a cruel word on the part of the one who is smitten in return. Or the physical hurt may be due to remote ancestral causes, to mental shock produced by evil tidings, to accidents, bad climate, unskilful handling at birth or in infancy. These are but suggestive illustrations, and not more than an infinitesimal part of an exhaustive list, but they serve to show that there is a fundamental distinction between these various physical consequences of sin, though only omniscience can distribute blame and pity in equitable proportion to innocence and ill-desert.

Similarly, some intellectual consequences of sin are due to physical causes which produce effects on the brain, and so affect the intellectual operations. Others may be due to strictly intellectual causes which furnish false data for judgment, or shut out essential facts in a manner for which the deluded thinker is no more accountable than he is for a cloud which obscures the sun, or for the false news published by a press agency. Here it is obvious that moral elements may, in many cases, enter into the stream of antecedents. A man may yield himself up too willingly to the bias given by false news, and may linger under a cloud which overshadows, when by an effort he could step out into the light. In this, and in many similar ways of which it is a sample, a man may be at least partially responsible for his own intellectual damage. Hence, although it is true that in some important respects a man is no more responsible for his beliefs than a leopard for

his spots, or an Ethiopian for the colour of his skin, it is also true that a man is responsible for the manner in which he deals with his opportunities to acquire information, and for the spirit in which he considers evidence and arguments, and prosecutes the quest for truth. Our intellectual operations are subject to inviolable law, and a demonstration *once seen* must enforce belief; but it still remains possible for moral qualities to so seriously prejudice the exercise of thought as to determine the formation of an unjust judgment or a false belief, for which, with all its issues, the thinker must be justly blamed.

Yet again, it is manifest that a man's environment is the product of an infinite variety of causes, physical, intellectual, and moral, which do their work in a fashion we are powerless to control or modify. The place, time, and social position in which we are born exert an incalculable influence upon our lives, and go far to determine the conditions of our moral probation. We are the children of our age and country without the possibility of choice or refusal. Yet in the course of an ordinary lifetime there is always some scope for selection. A man may drift or even force his way into an unfavourable environment through an intellectual mistake, through a culpable preference, or through an indolent neglect or cowardly refusal to make and carry out a choice. It was not in vain that Christ said, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation"—for men often elect to go into danger and dally with fascination, or fail to use due vigilance to avoid entanglements and the peril

of proximity to contagious sin. It is no uncommon thing, therefore, for men to ascribe their ruin to the force of circumstances, when they ought to blame their self-exposure to temptation. We may thankfully remember that God knows where we dwell, even "where Satan's seat is," and He will estimate defeats and victories according to the adverse forces to be overcome; but He, and He alone, can discriminate between our misfortunes and our faults.

These are a few rough hints of the tangled problem which Divine judgment only can unravel. I make no attempt to discuss it further than may thus suffice to confirm and illustrate the principle that in accordance with our definition of sin, the Righteous Judge and Saviour must of necessity distinguish between the consequences of sin for which the individuals who suffer them are not morally responsible, and those for which they are responsible either wholly or in part.

## LECTURE IV

### REMEDIAL MEASURES

THE vital distinction which has been drawn between evil and sin commands our belief that a righteous God will faithfully respect it, alike in judging and in saving men ; so that we may boldly say that He will not condemn men as guilty on account of any passive injuries, or erroneous but not ill-meaning thoughts or conduct, and will not do them the galling wrong of affecting to forgive their wounds or their mistakes, however grievously these may mar their nature and pervert their influence on others. It by no means follows, however, that because God will not confound these things which differ, evil and sin require, or even admit of two separate and independent remedial systems. While attention is fixed upon their ethical qualities, they seem to demand totally different methods of treatment ; but a closer investigation leads to an opposite conclusion by compelling us to recognise those resemblances and common qualities which naturally tend to obscure their ethical difference,

and have actually led to a widespread denial of its reality. Many forms of sin have their exact counterpart in guiltless evils, which are outwardly indistinguishable, being differentiated solely by subjective qualities which no human eye can discern. In addition to these external resemblances they have also some common properties which produce similar effects: they are co-existent in the same individuals and social groups, and they are in many ways so subtly interfused that neither can be perfectly remedied while the other remains. These facts are so important in their bearing upon subsequent discussions that they call for a more detailed examination.

The most innocent forms of evil and the most culpable forms of sin are alike in this, *that they are contrary to the will of God*. It is God's will to carry out sublime plans which involve the temporary sufferance of things which grieve Him, but this forbearance does not render them harmonious with His will; and His plans include an abiding purpose to counteract and overrule for good all conscious and all unconscious, all defiant and all unintentional, all active and all passive non-conformity to His will. He cannot tolerate evil merely because it is not sin. He must needs be solicitous to rectify the wrong He pities, as well as that which He condemns. He is the healer of diseases and the teacher of the ignorant and foolish, as well as the judge of the wicked and the pardoner of repented sin. Moreover, while individual men need to be redeemed from their



iniquities, society also needs readjustment, and all the ramifications and indirect results of man's mistakes and crimes must be eradicated before the Divine will can be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

In a pre-eminent degree it is essential that mankind should be delivered from evils which have worn the robes of virtue. The world has suffered terribly from the mistakes of conscientious men, and from the fruits of religious delusion. These guiltless breaches of the Divine Order are in some respects more disastrous in their consequences than unmistakable crimes, because they help to confound the moral judgments of mankind and cause evil to be accounted good. One of the hardest tasks which await the Christian Church is the complete reversal of some pagan notions of duty, and some false ideals of sanctity which dominate many nations and persist to a lamentable extent in professedly Christian lands. All these wrongful customs, habits, and ideals must of necessity be abolished before mankind can be conformed to the Divine will. Against them God must war with all the resources of righteousness and truth.

If all the woes of mankind were caused by blameless ignorance and mistakes, the remedy would be very simple, for more light would suffice to set us right, education would transform the race, and culture would produce righteousness. But unhappily man's mistakes are not all, or nearly all, innocent. All error is not sin, but sin is always error. Even the sins of the shrewdest and most highly intellectual

are stupid blunders, so that the transgressor deserves in plain language to be called a fool, and in a pre-eminent and Scriptural sense he is "the fool." To a great extent, therefore, the most innocent and the most culpable forms of error demand the same treatment. Both the ignorant man on whom God has compassion and the wicked man with whom He is angry need mental enlightenment. Both classes need guidance and instruction in the way of life, although the light which might suffice to emancipate the mind from error is inadequate for deliverance from sin.

But the relations of evil and sin are more intimate and subtle than thus appears. Each is a constant cause or occasion of the other. Sin, as we have already seen, inevitably produces error not only in the mind of the doer but in others around and in the generations that follow. The cloud which darkens a transgressor's sky obscures the heavens to many more, and casts a gloomy shadow over wide spaces of earth. Similarly, even innocent errors which bear fruit in guiltless non-conformity to the will of God work havoc, set up stumbling-blocks, and multiply the forces of temptation. Thus error can never be abolished until sin has been destroyed, and sin can never be exterminated while error persists.

This leads us into the presence of a still deeper, and in some respects more painful and almost appalling truth, viz., that the cure of moral ignorance and guiltless non-conformity to God's will involves a

process which often issues in the development of evil into sin. Enlightenment concerning the intrinsic quality of certain habits or states of mind, and their inaccordance with the will of God, does not always avail to induce their abandonment, and in every case of failure the time of ignorance which God can overlook (as Paul explained to the Athenians) passes away, and the day of judgment dawns. Directly light arrives the conduct which immediately before was only evil becomes sinful unless instantly and finally forsaken. "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin," said Christ, "but now they have no excuse for their sin" (John xv. 22). The coming of necessary light thus enforces on men a conscious choice of good and evil, and the choice is one in which all the forces of habit, and very often the blind impulses of natural propensity and inclination, are on the side of disobedience. Evil is often pleasant for a season, and habits are stubborn masters, which cannot be thrown off without a difficult and painful struggle; but the alternative is sin, and sin of a deadly kind.

Paul tells us that a specific function of the Hebrew law and discipline was to impart this knowledge of the inherent quality of acts and dispositions. With startling paradox he calls it a revelation of the "sinfulness of sin." Before the Divine righteousness could possibly be revealed for the remission and purging of sin, men had to know what sin means, and what things God abhors and must destroy.

Such teaching increased the complexity and arduousness of life. It brought new work for the conscience, new burdens of responsibility for the soul. Into man's nature it brought a warfare in which victory was possible only to heroic souls, and even to them, seemed always remote and often beyond the bounds of bravest hope. To the most sensitive and valiant strivers after righteousness the agony was the most intense. It seemed to them that their religious knowledge made them worse instead of better; and that the law which was meant for their deliverance from evil intensified the desires it bade them mortify and filled their hearts with shame.

The coming of Christ carried this process into a new and more advanced stage, and wherever the gospel is preached and the glories of holiness are proffered in Christ's name, the possibility of heightened sin and deepened condemnation is introduced. If Christ is not allowed to become a Saviour from both the guilt and the power of sin, the state of those who have once seen Him must of necessity be worse instead of better. As the standard of conduct is raised and the prospects of better life are made hopeful, the conscience has to deal with altogether new responsibilities, and as by degrees the realities of good and evil are perceived, and all illusions and infantile conceptions are banished by the growing light, things which were innocent in times of darkness and almost excusable in the dimness of early dawn, stand forth in all their naked vileness as abominations in the sight of God.

These considerations render it obvious that, although evil and sin must be distinguished by God as Judge and by God as Saviour—and neither can be totally eradicated while the other persists—yet the supreme problem demanding solution is the cure of sin strictly so-called. The nature of this solution has therefore now to be investigated.

Preceding discussions have reduced the scope of this inquiry within somewhat definite limits, and have prepared the way for a summary dismissal of several conceivable expedients.

(1) The annihilation of living beings is no remedy ✓  
for sin.

If destruction were a cure, prussic acid would be a panacea for all human diseases! Sin is a malady which mars and tends to destroy human beings. Whether it can work their absolute extinction we have left as an open question, but a world-wide completion of such a process by Divine fiat would obviously be a despairing confession by the Creator that He was incapable of repairing the ravages of sin, and preferred to wipe out the abortive results of His creative experiment. The only cure of sin is that which destroys the poison and repairs the devastation it has wrought in diseased moral natures.

But although the perishing of sinners is not in itself a cure of sin, we have seen that the ideal purpose of Creation is not necessarily forfeited by the non-survival of some transgressors. The question of proportion between survivors and failures is

one we are utterly unable to discuss. No arithmetical calculation can be tolerated, seeing that we are incapable of estimating the value of even one glorified creature to God, or to himself or to his fellows. All we can venture to affirm is that, given a widely operative cure, which falls short of universal success, a non-survival of inveterately wicked men would appear to our minds more congruous with the Divine nature and purposes than the preservation of incurable sinners in conscious misery and persistent wickedness for ever.

(2) The infliction of eternal conscious punishment on impenitent souls is no remedy for sin.

Our first principles do not absolutely exclude a possible endurance of eternal suffering by persistently wicked persons, but manifestly such suffering is not remedial. The idea of remedy is excluded by the word punishment, as defined by those who insist upon its necessity, and even if this term were so defined as to imply a curative design in God's mind, such a design would still be shut out by the word "eternal." Unlike the theory of conditional immortality, the dogma of eternal conscious punishment leaves the refuse of mankind to seethe and writhe, not only in everlasting torment, but in a perpetual attitude of blasphemous hostility to God. Instead of remedy, it seems to posit a development of the plague of sin to its utmost limit of atrocity and vileness. The fire of Gehenna which consumed the offal of Jerusalem, and the decaying bodies of animals, and of executed criminals, is no type of a

pandemonium in which the wicked are conserved in their wickedness by the will of a holy God. Such punishment, therefore, appears to be a frustration not only of God's desire to save sinners but of His desire to exterminate sin. Logically, we must admit its abstract possibility, but only on the melancholy hypothesis that God has no better alternative within His power.

(3) The pardon of sin is in itself no remedy.

Pardon must have an important place in any remedial measures, but forgiveness cannot morally precede repentance, and therefore cannot originate, although when subsequently given it may and does tend to deepen it. Some hope of pardon is essential to salvation, for repentance is precluded by despair. But unless the prospect of pardon is associated with some corrective influence, and is subject to such moral conditions as make for righteousness, it will aggravate rather than remedy the disease; for indiscriminate forgiveness tends to obliterate moral distinctions and to encourage the repetition of offences.

(4) The suppression of sin by coercive measures is no remedy.

It might perhaps be sufficient to say that when certain moral *states* have been recognised as sinful, the very word "suppression" denotes an unthinkable process. Active transgressions may be suppressed, but no external pressure or intimidating threats can put an end to inward disaffection and lawlessness. Indeed, repressive measures aggravate the desire to

rebel. There may be, and often is, a necessity for repressive governmental action. High-handed offenders cannot be allowed to work their fell designs unchecked, or society would be dissolved. There come times in the history of peoples when the Prince of Peace may give employment to those forces which are symbolised in the Apocalypse by the red horse of war, and the black horse of famine, and the pale horse of death. But these are not remedies. They are but temporary expedients to restrain the wrath, cupidity, profligacy, and arrogance of man, while slowly operating remedies are applied.

The forcible suppression of sin must be dismissed as non-remedial for a deeper reason than has yet been stated, viz., that if it could be made effective it would be equivalent to the destruction of human nature. The suppression of personality with its volitional freedom is in principle the same thing as the annihilation of persons, because no persons, in the true sense of that term, are left; what remains is but an army of automata, simulating but not possessing personality. Docetism is not confined to Christology, but has often been rife in anthropology, for it inevitably enters when free-will, which is the most essential constituent of a moral agent, has been denied.<sup>1</sup>

Any Divine action which determined human conduct otherwise than through the free play of human faculties, *i.e.*, through thought, affection, and volition, would deprive these faculties of their due

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 16.



activity in relation to conduct, and thus render them practically non-existent. The power of God to salvation must necessarily be a moral power working in harmony with man's moral nature. This is not a mere metaphysical dictum, but is universally implied in the Scriptures. It is the universal principle which underlies the particular fact affirmed by Paul when he said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. i. 16).

As the outcome of the foregoing discussion we are now in a position to lay down a broad and fundamental proposition, viz.:—That the Almighty cannot remedy sin by annihilating sinners; by inflicting upon them eternal penal sufferings; by an indiscriminate amnesty; or by forcible repression. These measures are within the scope of His omnipotence, but they would leave the Father's name unhallowed, the Father's throne in human hearts unoccupied, and the Father's will undone by men.

Conjoined with principles previously affirmed, this statement seems to introduce a dilemma. It has been agreed that unless God were to abdicate, and cease to be either God or good, He could not condone or tolerate the transgression of His own righteous will. The Divine nature impels God to employ His omnipotence in all possible ways for the extermination of sin and the salvation of sinners. But we have now ascertained that by a mere exertion of power God can do nothing to constrain

men to forsake sin and work righteousness. How, then, can these two principles be co-ordinated? It is of supreme importance that we should feel the full force of the difficulty, but there is no real dilemma. The two principles are not only compatible but complementary, and serve to explain much that is perplexing in the slow and painful course of human history. The one principle renders it inconceivable that God should ever cease to war against sin; the other compels us to acknowledge that the weapons of this warfare are spiritual, and that the strife may be indefinitely prolonged because the moral nature of God's object precludes the mere quelling of insurrection by force. Thus the duration of the strife depends not merely on His power, nor on His combined power and benevolence, but on these as God allows them to be resisted by human perversity, so that the hour of victory is deferred by the tenacity with which man cleaves to his evil ways. The one principle assures us that God's nature will not permit Him needlessly to lose any time or spare any possible activity for the attainment of His object; the other compels us to acknowledge that the nature of man, and the nature of sin, and the devastating effects it has produced may protract rebellion through immeasurable time. Hence the two principles when co-ordinated prepare us to witness the passing of ages, during which God's longsuffering tarries; but they forbid us to regard the slowness of Divine conquest as a mark of weakness, or as a portent of failure, or as

reflecting unfavourably on the Divine wisdom or goodness or zeal. They assure us that the long-suffering of God is not to be ascribed to slackness or indifference, but to His passion for salvation. He bears long with puny creatures who set their wills against His own, because He has respect for the work of His own hands, and can be satisfied with nothing less than the *voluntary obedience* of the moral beings He has made.

By this co-ordination of apparently conflictive principles we are conducted to the immediate though not the final object of our quest. The only real remedy for sin, and the only perfect satisfaction of God's nature, must consist in *the reconciliation of man to a state of voluntary obedience to the Divine will*. Nothing less and nothing else can harmonise the salvation of sinners and the extermination of sin. Only thus can God and man be satisfied together, and be made perfect in one according to the prayer of Christ. The inquiry before us, therefore, now takes this definite form:—By what measures can God elicit a voluntary obedience to Himself?

These measures must of necessity correspond to the exact nature of God's demands. Hence it must be our first business to define the obedience which God requires and would induce. Happily for us this task is quite simple, for we have only to remind ourselves of most familiar words. The language of Scripture is of sunlight clearness, and both Testaments give the same account of the whole duty of

man. All God's commandments are summed up in three words, "Thou shalt love"; all the precepts of the Decalogue, all the teachings of the prophets, and all the precepts and persuasions of Christ hang on these immeasurable words. Everything else in the ethical teachings of the Bible is an expansion, an explanation, or a particular application of this one law, which in the moral realm is the law of laws. Against this there can be no righteous legislation; beyond this no just legislation can extend. It includes our duty to God and to our fellows; and thus in the most literal sense love is the fulfilling of the law. Nothing else can conceivably fulfil it, and he that is guilty of transgressing the least of God's commands is necessarily guilty of the whole. Selfishness may obey many particular precepts, it may suppress the movements of ill-will, it may simulate the actions of benevolence, it may induce a lavish sacrifice of wealth, it may incite to deeds of spurious devotion, and may give a man's body to be drowned, or burned, or imprisoned ostensibly for the sake of others; but selfishness, whether it take the form of prudence or imprudence, cannot fulfil the Divine law, because however subtly masked, and however much it may be lauded by those whom it deceives, it is inherently the ethical opposite of love. Nothing but love can fulfil the law of God, or put men into harmony with the universal order of which He who is love is the Head.

This definition of the obedience God requires

marks an important stage in our inquiry. We have found that God's measures for the salvation of sinners and the extermination of sin must of necessity be such as are designed and adapted to reconcile men to a voluntary obedience to His perfect will. Advancing yet another step we have ascertained that this obedience can be induced only by measures which inspire that love which is the spring of all the conduct God enjoins, and the sum of all that He requires to see in human hearts. Thus our problem immediately resolves itself into the further question, By what means can God generate love in man?

### *The Generation of Love.*

Guided by the law that "like begets like," and also by the great saying of John, "We love Him because He first loved us," we may with all confidence affirm that love can only be generated by love. The apostolic theory of Christian love is thus seen to be not only consonant with reason, but the sublimest conceivable illustration of an inexorable natural law. It is also verified by the history of the gospel, and by all personal experience. "Love is of God," *i.e.*, all the love which can be found in creatures is derivative, and, like created life, it can only be accounted for by an eternal, self-existent source in God. God's love has no source outside His nature. It is neither caused nor nourished by the love of other beings, nor can any lack

of love in others lessen it. Man's heart, unfed by the love of friends on earth or by some fresh supply from Heaven, waxes cold. It is but a fire in which the fuel which burns emits itself in heat, and, unless replenished, must expire. But God's love is self-originated and independent of all external provocation. Hence man can no more save himself morally than he can warm his own body when benighted amid Alpine snows and destitute of food and shelter. Without love man cannot do God's will, and God alone has love to give. Seeing, therefore, that it is a necessity of God's nature to do everything in His power to save His creatures by destroying sin in their hearts and enlisting them as willing servants to Himself; seeing, also, that He can only secure this end by so communicating His love as to reproduce it in them and make them partakers of His Divine nature, we are entitled to conclude that God will commend and impart His love to men at any cost to Himself.

### *Objections.*

To an ever-increasing number of Christian thinkers the great principle now affirmed stands verified by its own luminous sublimity and by the clearest utterances of Scripture. To them it is the radiance of Divine glory which shines into our hearts from the face of Christ, putting to shame all lower thoughts of God's character and ways, and rendering every adverse doctrine not only incredible

but monstrous. But this assurance is still unfelt by many, and, before advancing on the path logically open, we must frankly meet some objections.

The most radical objection with which we are confronted is a denial that God loves sinners. This denial is based on the assumption that such love for sinners is inconceivable because God, who hates sin, must needs regard the sinner and his sin as indivisible until justification has taken effect. When baldly stated this opinion sounds like a categorical denial of numerous texts of Scripture, and those who propound it are painfully aware that there is some "appearance of contradiction"; but this appearance they endeavour with not a little courage and subtlety to explain away. Their method is to restrict the declaration of God's love for enemies and sinners exclusively to the elect prior to the date of their conversion. They attribute His love for the elect not to the magnanimity which can love them while regarding them as foes, but to the fact that He chose them out of the world and foreordained them to be members of Christ. No one has ever put this more plausibly than Augustine. He freely states that "God had love toward us even when we were practising enmity against Him and working iniquity," but he will not allow that this love for "us" as His chosen people had any other ground or reason than His own work in us. Commenting on the words of Christ "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved me," he observes that the word "as" does not mean "equally" or "in the

same way," but "because," *i.e.*, "Thou hast loved them because Thou hast loved me," and then adds, "He could not but love the members of His son, seeing He loveth the Son Himself; *nor is there any other reason for loving His members* save that He loveth Himself (*i.e.*, the Son) . . . . He loveth us inasmuch as we are members of Him whom He loveth; and in order that we might be so He loved us *on this account* before we existed" (on St. John, Tractate cx. 5, 6).

This places before us in a clear light the ruling principle on which all Augustinian interpretations of Scripture, whether ancient or modern, are based. God is not said to love sinners because it is His nature to love, and nothing unloving can proceed from the unmixed fountain of His goodness; but He loves some sinners because they are from all eternity incorporated with Christ by a sovereign and unconditioned decree. Viewed chronologically and from our earthly standpoint God loves the elect while they are "practising enmity" and sinning against Him; but this is simply because He regards them by anticipation as His children through their predestined union with Christ. Thus the love of God has no outgoings beyond the circle of His adopted children, and even in their case it is not allowed that Christ came into the world to commend and communicate it as the instrumental power of salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Calvin takes the same view as his ancient master,

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 17.



but states it a little more roughly. Thus he writes that "no man can descend into\* himself and seriously consider what he is without feeling that God is angry and at enmity with him."<sup>1</sup> Thus he assumes that the estimate of God's mind and attitude, which is formed by the workings of a guilty conscience, unenlightened by the gospel, may be cited by a theologian as good evidence to support his doctrine that God hates sinners! In so doing he also fails to distinguish between anger and enmity, and betrays no consciousness of having identified two things which, though commonly combined in evil men, are perfectly separable, seeing that enmity is the opposite of love, and must always be wicked, whereas anger is often righteous, and is felt most keenly when those we love best do wrong. In the same strain he declares "that God who prevents us with His mercy was our enemy until He was reconciled unto us by Christ." In perfect harmony with this view it is taught that God's love for His friends is bestowed upon them only because *He has been* reconciled to them by what Christ has done. It is therefore an effect which Christ produces in God, and in no sense the cause of man's reconciliation to God. It is in no degree the efficient force of man's salvation, but is a boon bestowed upon a few because they are saved by a Divine decree. Consequently God's love is not the essence of His character, which neither sin nor unbelief can alter, and the gospel is not a message of equal truth to all

<sup>1</sup> *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book ii. c. 16 § 2.

the world or worthy of acceptance by every creature.<sup>1</sup>

I should be glad to think that these antique theological ideas were also obsolete, but, unhappily, the supposition would be incorrect. That such ideas are discarded by many who subscribe Confessions of faith which affirm them must be acknowledged with mingled satisfaction and regret. It is also true that they find little expression in the literature which commands a wide public acceptance. But writers of some eminence and of far-spreading influence still teach that out of the fountain of the Divine nature there flow the sweet waters of love and the bitter waters of hostility. I take the following passage from a work which is extensively used as a theological text-book in English and American colleges. Discriminating between punishment and chastisement the author writes: "The punishment of the wicked is always in Scripture referred to the anger of God, and the chastisement of His people to His love . . . the wicked and the good do not stand in the same relation to God as objects of benevolence . . . when suffering is seen to come from a Father's hand, and to be a manifestation of love, it has a sanctifying power ; but when it comes from the hand of God, as a judge and an avenger, and is the expression of displeasure and a proof of our alienation from God, its tendency is to harden and exasperate . . . only when reconciled to God and assured of His

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 18.

love do they bring forth fruit unto God.”<sup>1</sup> Here it will be seen that love is so conceived that it can be antithetically set over against anger, *i.e.*, love and anger are regarded as opposites, and as leading to totally different modes of action. We are forbidden to tell men who feel the stripes of castigation, and are thereby hardened and exasperated, that they misconstrue the feelings of God. We may not assure them that God desires to correct their lives, and that every stroke laid upon transgressors has a kind intent. On the contrary, we are informed that there is no benevolent design in their sufferings. Thus the difference between the reconciled and the unreconciled is not traced to the fact that the one class believes the truth about God and the other disbelieves it, but that God is friendly to the one and hostile to the other. Thus the belief cherished by each party corresponds to the facts, and neither is deceived in regard to God’s actual disposition. The Christian who joyfully declares “He loved me” has a true faith; but we have no right to tell an unconverted man who believes in God’s hostility that he is cherishing a lie in his heart. When one man suffers chastisement and ascribes it to a Father’s love he is right and is benefited. When the other endures similar sufferings and ascribes them to God’s enmity, he also is right, and being thereby hardened and enraged, he experiences the natural and inevitable effect of God’s actual disposition and attitude towards himself.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Charles Hodge’s *Systematic Theology*, vol. i. 418.

Thus the rod is to one a curse and to the other a blessing, but in each case the effect corresponds to God's foreknowledge and design.

One other objection to our position remains for notice, and it claims the most patient and respectful consideration because it proceeds from men who fervently believe, and freely teach, that God's love is universal, that He truly loves sinners, that this love is the fountain of salvation, and was truly displayed in the life and death of Christ, but who deny that the revelation of love was the primary object of Christ's coming, and contend that it is only an incidental and secondary effect of His death.

This contention may most conveniently be considered as advanced by Dale in his work on the Atonement, and particularly as re-stated and emphasised in his Preface to the seventh edition.<sup>1</sup> The passage to be examined follows a quotation from Bushnell's work on "Vicarious Sacrifice," which Dale regarded as a piteous confession, that the "moral theory," as stated by the writer, "if true, is powerless; and the objective theory, if false, is effective."<sup>2</sup> It cannot be conceded that "objective" and "Penal" are, as this sentence assumes, synonymous or interchangeable terms; but apart from this misleading assumption there is nothing unfair or exaggerated in

<sup>1</sup> I make this selection partly because Dale is deservedly esteemed as a broadminded, large-hearted, and unconventional theologian, and also because no other work on the subject has been so widely read in the present day.

<sup>2</sup> *The Atonement*, Preface to seventh edition, lii.

the verdict it pronounces. From a totally different standpoint I shall shortly have to deprecate Bushnell's handling of the subject, but at present wish only to explain the particular form in which Dale's independent argument was introduced.

As a sequel to his trenchant criticism of Bushnell, the following passage is presented as an adequate proof that the Penal theory is not only effective but true :—

“Nor is it only on the practical side that the ‘moral’ view is fatally defective. Theoretically it has a fatal flaw, at least when presented under its most ordinary form. Most of those preachers who deny that there is any direct relation between the death of Christ and the remission of sins are in the habit of saying that Christ died in order to reveal the greatness of the Divine love for mankind, and that this revelation of love is intended to draw the hearts and lives of men to God. But, unless there is something more to be said, this statement cannot possibly afford us any intellectual or moral satisfaction.

“Let me use a homely illustration. If a friend of mine had a son in San Francisco seriously ill, and was unable to go to him, I might offer to go myself. By crossing the Atlantic and the North American continent in order to nurse my friend's child, by remaining with him till he became strong enough to bear the journey home, by taking all the trouble necessary to bring the invalid back to his father's house, I should show in a very effective way my affection for my friend. But suppose that my friend had no son in San Francisco, and no other interests there which required personal attention, would there

be any sense in my saying that I meant to go to New York, and to travel across to the Pacific coast, simply to show my affection for him? When I returned, would he be able to attach any meaning to my words if I told him that I had made the journey to demonstrate my friendship? If the son was lying ill at San Francisco, my chief motive in going there might be a desire to show my affection to the father; but unless some object apart from the showing of affection was to be secured by going there, the journey would be no proof of my love for my friend. And so, unless the death of Christ had some direct end to answer in the redemption of the race, I confess myself unable to attach any meaning to the statement that the death of Christ was a revelation of His love.

“To take an illustration which lies a little closer to the subject under consideration. If my brother made his way into a burning house to save my child from the flames, and were himself to perish in his heroic venture, his fate would be a wonderful proof of his affection for me and mine; but if there were no child in the house, and if I were told that he entered it and perished with no other object than to show his love for me, the explanation would be absolutely unintelligible. The statement that Christ died for no other purpose than to reveal His love to mankind is to me equally unintelligible.

“It may of course be argued that the death of our Lord was one of the necessary incidents of His Incarnation; that in assuming our nature and living a life of courageous righteousness He was certain to provoke the cruel passions of wicked men; and that having undertaken the great work of founding the kingdom of heaven among men, by teaching and example, He demonstrated the greatness of His love for us by not shrinking from the sufferings and death

which were the inevitable consequences of His work. This is, at least, an intelligible theory ; but were the sufferings and the death the inevitable consequences of His work? It does not seem that our Lord Himself regarded them so. 'Thinkest thou not,' He said to Peter at the moment of His arrest, 'that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me twelve legions of angels?' In the second lecture I have endeavoured to show that 'to our Lord's own mind His death was something more than the inevitable consequence of His fidelity to the truth, and of His antagonism to the corrupt ambition, the hypocrisy, and the evil passions of the ecclesiastical rulers of the Jewish people.' It was His *intention* to die for men ; and I submit that while such a death as Christ died was a transcendent revelation of love—if the death itself was in any way necessary for human redemption—the death is left without explanation if we are simply assured that He died to show His love for us."

Reviewing the entire passage, I find myself at a loss to understand how so strong and usually clear a thinker could have written it, and written it as a final and conclusive defence of his position. His argument largely consists of illustrations intended to show that the revelation of love, apart from a direct end to be served, *over and above the mere demonstration itself*, would be futile, and that a sacrificial act which had no ground or reason except the display of love would afford no intellectual or moral satisfaction. That there is a large element of truth in this contention may cheerfully be admitted. Theatrical displays of affection by wilful self-sub-

jection to pain or loss in ways which confer no benefit on the beloved objects are not only senseless but are an insult to the intelligence and right feelings of their objects. The cases supposed by Dale to illustrate this point are perfectly clear, and in some respects convincing. My sole objection to them is that they are utterly irrelevant. It must be confessed that if I take a journey to San Francisco without any object, except to prove to a friend in England that I am ready to undertake such a labour and expense for his sake, I am more likely to excite his pity or his laughter than his affectionate gratitude. But beyond this, my friend will certainly have cause to complain that I have wronged both his intellect and his heart by imputing to him a need for such a silly demonstration, and by my supposition that it could possibly be a source of comfort and satisfaction to his mind. It is also clear that if my friend has a son in San Francisco, and I go to nurse that son in a dangerous illness, and presently bring him home to his father, I do indeed prove my love for my friend very effectively, just as Dale represents. But this illustration betrays an astonishing lapse of logical acumen, and fails to throw any light upon the subject under consideration. There is no analogy whatever between a man going to America to prove his love for a friend whom he leaves in England and Christ's coming away from His Father in Heaven to prove that Father's love for His rebellious human offspring here on earth. To exhibit anything like a true analogy, the illustration



ought to have depicted a case in which the friend had a son in a far land who was estranged and hostile and was wrecking his life because ignorant or incredulous of his father's affection, and who therefore needed to be reconciled to his father. But such an illustration would have been fatal to Dale's argument.

Equally futile and irrelevant are the other cases.

No one has ever suggested as a theory of the Atonement that Christ came into the world and died to prove His own love for the Father. Still less has any one suggested that Christ came into a world where God had no sons in sickness or dire peril to be saved and restored, and died here a needless death to prove His love for the Father in Heaven. The theory which Dale needed to grapple with is one which in all its forms affirms that Christ came because the Father sent Him, and sent Him to commend not His own love for the Father, but the Father's love for men, and that He did so because their understandings were darkened, "being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. iv. 17-18), and because it is eternal life "to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent." This theory assumes, or rather accepts, the statements of Scripture that men are perishing for lack of precisely such knowledge of God as Christ conveys and verifies in His life and death. Dale's illustrations have therefore no relevance, and they show how utterly he has failed to touch or even to apprehend the position he proposed to assail.

The same extraordinary misapprehension is betrayed in the entire body of the discussion, and is emphasised with italics in a sentence which was meant for a trenchant and triumphant "Q.E.D." "I submit that while such a death as Christ died was a transcendent revelation of love—*if the death itself was in any way necessary for human redemption*—the death is left without explanation if we are simply assured that He died to show His love for us" (p. lv.). This sentence assumes that the revelation of love was not inherently necessary for human redemption, and it also assumes that the death was not necessary for the adequate revelation of this love. We have already found that the revelation of God's love to men in their present condition as sinners, and to some extent as the victims of sin, is indispensable to the production of love in men, and therefore to their reconciliation to a voluntary obedience to His will. Hence we have concluded that the demonstration of God's love is essential to the satisfaction of His own nature and the fulfilment of His purposes as the Creator and Moral Governor of the world. We have not yet formally introduced the death of Christ as the supreme commendation of His love, but we are in a position to so far anticipate future lines of thought as to say that the only evidence yet lacking to complete our disposal of Dale's argument is a reasonable proof that, without the Cross, Christ's demonstration of God's love would have been inadequate for the perfect accomplishment of His designs. If this can

be supplied in its due place, we shall be in a position to claim Dale's support to our position, because we shall have shown that the "*death itself was . . . necessary for human redemption.*"<sup>1</sup>

Reviewing these representative opinions it will be seen that while they differ in their thoughts of what love is, they are unanimous in denying that the revelation of Divine love is the primary need of humanity, and betray a total failure to conceive that such a revelation is a necessity of the Divine nature, because essential to God's purpose in the salvation of sinners and the extermination of sin. Those who limit the love of God to a portion of the race, and some who rejoice in its universality, are agreed in the contention that Christ did not come into the world to bring this love home to men, as the efficient force of reconciliation, but in some way to propitiate, satisfy, or reconcile God, or in more abstract terms to satisfy the claims of His justice by enduring the penalty of sin as the prerequisite of forgiveness.

In principle this contention has been disposed of by anticipation in our discussion of God's nature, but it requires to be dealt with in its present form as an objection to the validity of our projected course of thought. Its special claim to attention lies in the fact that it introduces the great word Propitiation, and assumes that we are running counter to or setting aside the Biblical doctrine which that word represents. Such a plea as this is so grave and

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 19.

specific that it must be met on its own ground as an alleged doctrine of Scripture. This necessitates an examination of Biblical references to propitiation. The task is not an easy one, because we have to deal with terms which have long been identified with ideas which, as I hope to demonstrate, do not properly belong to them. It is also complicated and painfully prejudiced by serious concessions which have been made by various writers in regard to traditional interpretations of Scripture.

The first concession demanding notice is frequently, though not always, made in order to lighten the ship of Christian theology by throwing overboard the Old Testament idea of sacrifice as a survival of ancient Semitic heathenism, while insisting that in the New Testament this heathenish idea is not only discarded but reversed. A distinguished theologian draws this distinction by observing that "the change in the priesthood signified a radical change in the relation of God to sacrifice. In the Levitical as in other religious systems the sacrifice was offered to please God, to win His favour, to propitiate Him by the surrender of something precious to man. But in the Christian system this standpoint is transcended ; the initiative lies with God . . . whatever the death of Christ may signify, it does not mean an expedient for quenching the wrath of God, or for buying off man from His vengeance. This was a gain for religion greater than mind can calculate."<sup>1</sup>

If convinced that the Levitical system was thus

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 500.

on a par with pagan religions in its conception of God's relation to sacrifice, I should rejoice with Dr. Fairbairn in the deliverance of mankind from such a superstition; but although our recognition of facts must never be deterred by any fear of consequences, we must frankly confess that grave misgivings would arise from such a breach of continuity in Biblical theology as this opinion postulates. A vast stride in advance is consonant with our thought of Christ as the consummator of the religion which constituted the Hebrews a peculiar people; but a complete reversal of the significance of sacrifice would mean the introduction of a new religion, and would almost justify the contention of Marcion that Jesus Christ revealed a new God. It may fairly be said that the contrast is affirmed only between the Levitical system and Christianity, and not between the theology of the prophets and the teachings of Christ. If this were all that could be said, it would at least afford some relief to those who take Dr. Fairbairn's view of the New Testament doctrine of sacrifice; but in my judgment even this qualified statement is unsatisfactory, because it admits that the idea of sacrifice embodied in the Levitical ordinances was akin to that which prevailed in heathen systems of religion, and terribly at variance with the teaching of the prophets. This theory of antagonism I reject as based upon a grave misinterpretation of the ritual law, and although this places me in opposition to a formidable array of critical authorities, I am confident that the position can be established by irrefragable

proof. My contention is that neither in the Levitical system nor in prophetic writings is there any assertion, or suggestion, or implication of the idea that God needs to be, or conceivably can be, appeased by sacrifice. If this contention can be sustained on critical grounds, it will dissipate any painful suspicion that there was such a breach of continuity between the old dispensation and the new as some allege, and by doing this it will help to place the Christian doctrine of propitiation on a broad, firm basis. New Testament doctrine must be determined by severe though sympathetic examination of the language in which it is stated; but we may fairly attach some force to the consideration that it would be very astounding if we were to discover that Christianity approximates more nearly to ancient idolatrous religions than did the Levitical system in its doctrine of sacrifice in relation to the character of God.

A far more serious and damaging concession was made by Horace Bushnell in his work on "Vicarious Sacrifice," and has already been alluded to as criticised by Dale. The following extracts include passages selected by Dale for animadversion:—

"Atonement is a change wrought in us, a change by which we are reconciled to God. Propitiation is an objective conception by which that change taking place in us is spoken of as occurring representatively in God. Just as guilty minds, thrown off from God, glass their feeling representatively in God, imagining that God is thrown off from them ;

or just as we say that the sun rises, instead of saying what would be very awkward to us and yet is the real truth, that we ourselves rise to the sun.”<sup>1</sup> “There is no such thought as that God is placated, or satisfied by the expiatory pain offered Him. It supposes, first, a subjective atoning or reconciliation in us; and, then, as a further result, that God is objectively propitiated, or set in a new relation of welcome and peace. Before, He could not embrace us even in His love. His love was the love of compassion; now it is the love of complacency and permitted friendship” (p. 447-8).

Three grave faults must be pointed out in these passages.

(1) The attempt to distinguish between Atonement and Propitiation, which is futile and misleading.<sup>2</sup>

(2) The admission that propitiation is spoken of in Scripture as occurring in God.

(3) The contention that, notwithstanding the above admission in regard to the actual words of Scripture, the real doctrine of its authors is that the change takes place in man.

It is much to be deplored that in consequence of this extraordinary handling of the subject, those who affirm that the reconciliation of God to men is taught in Scripture can claim Bushnell as a witness that, verbally at least, they are correct. It must be confessed that those who plead that the Scriptures

<sup>1</sup> *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, p. 450.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 2c.

mean what they say are in a stronger position than those who protest that they must mean something else. Bushnell's method of interpretation may fairly be applied to many fervid utterances of religious feeling, and in particular to some which occur in poetical writings like the Psalms ; but we no more expect a confusion of subjective and objective, or of human and Divine feelings in theological discussions such as Paul's, than we expect to find a modern astronomer using the language of the Ptolemaic system in a scientific treatise when describing the relations of the sun to the earth. The question whether God changes or whether man changes is vital to religious faith and worship, and by attributing inaccurate popular phraseology to the Scriptural account of our relations with God, Bushnell was guilty of a double fault. He uncritically, though of course reluctantly, allowed himself to be dominated by traditional interpretations which misrepresent the language actually used in Scripture, and then, in order to evade the effect of this error, he was tempted to attribute an element of insincerity and unreality to Scriptural doctrine, and thus undermined, not only his own influence as a teacher, but the moral authority of the New Testament.

The effects of this maltreatment of the subject transpire in his closing chapter on "Practical Uses and Ways of Preaching." Like many other preachers of a moral theory Bushnell felt a grave difficulty in presenting the gospel effectively as



the instrumental power of God in reconciling men to Himself. He frankly admitted that "any strictly subjective style of religion is vicious. It is moral self-culture, in fact, and not religion" (p. 467). Christ is here, he maintained, "to be the moral power of God on the world, and the power of God unto salvation. But if any one should set himself to preaching only this, turning it round and round, citing texts for it, and arguing down objections, he would only postpone the power he undertakes to assert" (p. 454). In a similar tone he wrote: "If the question arises how we are to use such a history (as that of the cross) so as to be reconciled by it, we hardly know how to begin. How shall we come unto God by the help of this martyrdom? How shall we turn it, or turn ourselves under it, so as to be justified and set in peace with God?" (p. 460). But his only answer was to say, "Plainly there is a want here, and this want is met by giving a thought-form to the facts *which is not in the facts themselves*"; and again, "We want, in short, to use these altar terms just as freely as they are used by those who accept the formula of expiation or judicial satisfaction for sin" (p. 463).

This comes perilously near to the offence of using words in a non-natural sense, and certainly it lends colour to the charge of borrowing the language of a rejected theory to cover the leanness of his own. I agree with Bushnell that we cannot spare the altar terms of Scripture, but if this "battery" is to be retaken the feat can only be achieved by a laborious

process of elucidation and interpretation which will serve to show that these terms are not legitimately used by those who seek at present to monopolise them. Unless we can honestly use them as thought-forms, which truly express what is in the facts of the gospel story, we must relinquish their use and confess ourselves at variance with Scripture. It is incredible that God has devised thought-forms which suggest ideas which are untrue, because a plain statement of the truth would be less helpful to our minds! If it be true, as Bushnell declares, that there is "no sacrifice, or oblation, or atonement, or propitiation" in the evangelical facts, we must not trade on all or any of these terms even to save men's souls. If, however, it be true that there was in the facts of the history a most real sacrifice and propitiation, but one which the Penal theory distorts and Bushnell failed to apprehend, we are entitled, and indeed are under a solemn obligation, to use these "altar terms" and to rescue them from long misuse.

## LECTURE V

### THE BIBLICAL IDEA OF PROPITIATION

#### i. *In the Old Testament.*

FOR the purposes of this inquiry it would be superfluous to engage in a critical discussion of any still open questions respecting the authorship, revision, collection, or date of the Old Testament writings. By whatever process they were brought together in their present form the question before us is solely concerned with their interpretation. The writers of the New Testament were powerfully influenced by the writings which they reverently quoted as the oracles of their ancient faith, and it is to these writings viewed as a collective whole that appeal is made by Christian theologians in support of those views of propitiation which are here called in question. If our examination of the Old Testament brought to light any contradictory or divergent teachings on the subject of Atonement, it would become necessary to inquire into their relative antiquity, and we might with possible advantage distinguish between the law of the second temple and

more primitive codes or fragments. But I am unprepared to admit of any dissonant teachings. I can find none alien to the spirit of Christianity, and can therefore afford to refrain from any discussion of the perturbing questions raised by the higher criticism.

The word Propitiation does not appear in the Old Testament (R.V.), and the word "Atonement" is not used in the New Testament (R.V.); but although the two companies of revisers could not agree upon any plan for preserving uniformity, the two words stand for the same idea, and represent the same term in Hebrew, or its equivalent in Greek, as determined by the Septuagint version. The great Hebrew word *kipper*, which is rendered Atonement, or, to make Atonement, is usually, and I think correctly, traced to a root which signifies *to cover*, but by some means it came to be used in the Old Testament in a special religious sense in which the figure of covering is almost, if not altogether, lost. Indeed, in some important respects this meaning appears to be practically reversed. The history of the word prior to its devotion to a technical religious use may be untraceable, but if ever used for common purposes as a verb signifying to cover, it must have been gradually reserved for sacred use. About twenty different Hebrew words are translated "cover," but "*kipper*" is never so rendered, and whenever the idea of covering *sin* is manifestly present, another word, *kāsāh*, is used.<sup>1</sup>

In several instances *kipper* is used with God as the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 21.

subject, and if it be urged that the idea of covering would in these cases be suggested to a Hebrew reader, I am not anxious to maintain the contrary; though the suggestion seems highly improbable, except in regard to Jer. xviii. 23, where we read "*forgive not* their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from Thy sight." Here the parallelism may be thought to favour the rendering, "cover not their iniquity." In other cases the figure seems incongruous.<sup>1</sup> The question is not worth discussing, because God's right to cover sin is indisputable, and thus no religious or ethical principle is at stake. The idea of a Divine hiding of sin is certainly expressed elsewhere by *kahsah*, and also where totally different forms of expression are employed, e.g., Psal. li. 9; Isa. xxxviii. 17; Micah vii. 19. For these reasons I refrain from making a sweeping assertion that the etymological force of the term is invariably absent. In the verses quoted I neither admit nor deny its presence, but leaving this question open as a matter of no religious importance, I proceed to affirm—

(1) That in the Old Testament use of *kipper*, the idea of covering or hiding sin *by the person who offers sacrifice, or his priestly representative, is never present.*

Outside the ritual law the doctrinal teaching of the Old Testament on the great moral principle involved is most explicit and consistent. The covering or hiding of sin is distinctly dealt with under three

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Deut. xxxii. 43; xxi. 8; Ezek. xvi. 63; II. Chron. xxx. 18; Psal. lxxv. 3; lxxviii. 38.

aspects, and in each class of cases the word *kāsāh* is employed.

(a) The covering, or non-exposure of offences is spoken of with approval when it springs from a generous desire to screen the faults of a neighbour rather than drag them into publicity, *e.g.*, "Hatred stirreth up strife, but love covereth all sins" (Prov. x. 12). "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love, but he that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends" (Prov. xvii. 9). The charitable disposition thus commended must not be confounded with a suppression of evidence intended to frustrate the administration of justice, and it has nothing in common with the pride, or duplicity, or moral cowardice which seeks to escape the humbling duty of confession, whether to an injured fellow-man or to God.

(b) The covering, or blotting out of sin by God is spoken of as a blessing which man may seek and may rejoice in when obtained, *e.g.*, "Blessed is he whose sin is covered" (Psal. xxxii. 1; *cf.* also Psal. lxxxv. 2; Neh. iii. 37, iv. 5). The same idea is variously expressed, but in no form can God's covering be confounded with a sinner's effort to conceal or cloak his sin. On the contrary, man's confession is always affirmed or implied as the condition of God's forgiveness.

(c) Man's attempt to hide iniquity from God's sight is frequently spoken of, and always in severe terms of condemnation. Indeed, it is clearly taught both in the Old Testament and in the New that this futile and offensive effort constitutes a bar to

all forgiveness. It is a fault which admits of repentance, but which is unpardonable until abandoned. This doctrine is enforced in a great variety of forms and in innumerable passages of Scripture, but we need only cite those in which the figurative word "to cover" is used. Job indignantly repels the thought that he has been guilty of such baseness: "If like Adam I *covered* my transgressions by hiding iniquity in my bosom" (Job xxxi. 33). The general law is declared in a familiar proverb, "He that *covereth* his transgressions shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13). The psalm, which, as already quoted, speaks of the blessedness of the man "whose sin is covered" by God, is also well described as "the great confessional psalm," and it expressly teaches that the only way in which a sinner can be allowed to seek such Divine obliteration is that of laying bare his inmost being to the Lord. "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psal. xxxii. 5).

If it were necessary, the testimony thus adduced might be indefinitely augmented, but the doctrine as taught in the sacred writings outside the ritual code is indisputable. The position, therefore, to which we are brought is this—either the etymological force of *kipper* is lost in its special usage as a technical term for a sacrificial atonement, or we are shut up to the conclusion that the Levitical law of

sacrifice contradicts and subverts the first principles of moral discipline, and is a flagrant defiance of the most explicit and persistent doctrines of ethical theism.

Such a conclusion would not be unwelcome to many critics, for it is practically the same as that which not a few have arrived at by another road. The painfulness of such a verdict to other minds is no disproof of its soundness; and we must confront the issue with a fearless love of truth. We have therefore to inquire whether the idea of "covering" sin by a sacrifice is discoverable in the ritual law itself.

At the outset I must call attention to a significant fact which has already been affirmed implicitly, but one which is so important that it demands specific mention, viz., that the word *kipper* was never used by a prophet or psalmist when denouncing the wickedness of concealing sin. Had these writers been actuated by any conscious antagonism to some ceremonial law of atonement, they would certainly have made their meaning clear by using the technical term; but they never did this, and the technical term is never referred to in the Old Testament in an unfavourable sense. The natural inference to be drawn from this fact is too obvious for insistence, viz., that the law of sacrificial atonement was not the object of those denunciations which were hurled against the detestable notion that sacrifice could cover and compound iniquity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I use the expression "the law" broadly but without prejudice to any critical opinion in regard to dates. However late the Priestly



This inference can only be set aside by strong, clear, and positive proof of contradictory facts.

This negative argument has great force, but we have stronger and more direct evidence to prove that the ritual law, as distinct from those illicit customs which the prophets condemned, was in strict agreement with the moral principle that, if sin is to be forgiven, it must be confessed, and not concealed or covered.

The fact that the law of atonement, whoever devised it, was proclaimed as a Divine enactment, is a proof that its object was to secure the uncovering rather than the covering of sin. The law prescribed what offerings should be presented on account of various offences, and the very act of the priest in complying with this command was in itself a confession that a particular offence had been committed. The offerer brought the prescribed sacrifice to the priest, and thus acknowledged his faultiness, and the priest became his representative and carried up his confession to the altar.

Hence it appears that the idea of confession is necessarily and inextricably embedded in the law of atonement. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews advanced no novel doctrine when he wrote, "But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sins every year" (Heb. x. 3). Whatever else, and

Code may be brought down, the technical use of *kipper* must be very ancient. The argument of the text is therefore valid in reference to psalms of late date when the Priestly Code was certainly in force; and also to the prophets and poets who are supposed to have known a less elaborate Torah.

whatever more may be found in them, sin-offerings were essentially and primarily confessional; and as the nature of confession is the moral contradictory of "covering," it not only warrants, but demands, a recognition of the truth, that in this regard the ritual law was in harmony with the first principles of ethical theism as expounded in the psalms and the prophets.

This argument is vividly illustrated and confirmed by the fact that in three cases an atonement was permitted when offenders voluntarily confessed their transgressions, although it was categorically forbidden if these same transgressions were discovered in spite of endeavours to conceal them.

(*a*) Under certain conditions an atonement was permitted for the crime of bearing false witness, and for the suppression of testimony in a court of justice. In either form this is a sin which human tribunals have always found themselves ill-fitted to deal with, because they are practically impotent for its detection in a large proportion of the cases which arise. Yet it is supremely important that the innocent should not suffer, and that the guilty should not escape through the lying speech or culpable silence of witnesses. On this account it is eminently desirable that those who have failed to do their duty should be encouraged to confess their sin, and, as far as possible, avert or rectify a miscarriage of justice. This is one of the few cases, therefore, in which repentance may safely be allowed to find a place in civil procedure, because its genuineness is

guaranteed by a spontaneous confession of wrongdoing. The shame thus incurred is itself a punishment, and any further penalty would help to frustrate justice by adding to the motives for concealment. Hence the law decreed that if a fault of this kind were freely confessed, though not if it were discovered by others, the culprit might be permitted to bring a sin-offering to the priest, and that thereupon his sin should be forgiven.

(*b*) If a man had sworn an oath to do a thing which he subsequently found would involve the commission of a sin, the law provided that he must not do wrong in order to be consistent, and decreed that if he confessed his fault, he might bring a sin-offering and be absolved from the oath and forgiven. By this law, if known and duly administered, Saul would have been required to desist from his purpose to slay Jonathan, and Jephtha would have been released from the vow under which his daughter was sacrificed.

(*c*) If a man committed fraud in the capacity of a trustee, or dishonestly appropriated property which he had found, or if he improperly detained or stole a neighbour's goods, the law decreed that in the event of his crime being discovered he must restore the value of his illicit gain two, four, or fivefold, or in default should be sold into bondage. In such cases no sacrifice was allowed. But if the man repented, and proved his sincerity by voluntary confession and restitution, he was only required to add one-fifth to the value of the property restored. Having done

this—but not before—he was permitted to bring a sacrifice and forgiveness was assured. This provision endangered no legal or moral interest, and it encouraged one who had secretly yielded to temptation to undo the consequences of his crime. Zacchæus might perhaps have claimed the benefit of this law as a confessor, but he proved the genuineness of his contrition by undertaking to act as one who had been convicted of dishonesty. He seems to have felt that he had been read through and through by Christ and dared not pose as a confessor.

None of these cases can be regarded as implying that forgiveness was granted on the ground that sin had been covered by sacrifice. In each case the sin-offering was permitted as a most gracious, though perfectly righteous, concession; and although the offering was not only sanctioned but required, the forgiveness which followed was obviously granted on the ground that the sin had been repented and confessed, that all possible reparation had been made, and chastisement humbly accepted.

(2) The idea of appeasing God or of offering to Him any inducement to alter His disposition towards the sinner was not included in or suggested by the Old Testament usage of *kipper*. Several considerations combine to place this statement beyond reasonable doubt.

(a) The only grammatical form which could express the idea of appeasing God or effecting any kind of change in His mind is carefully and con-

sistently avoided. When the idea of appeasement is intended the verb must be followed by a mention of the person to be appeased, placated or propitiated in the accusative. This is the constant form of expression in pagan literature, but the Scriptures uniformly avoid it, except in a few cases where God is not the object, and these rare instances serve by contrast to make the peculiar idiom of the ritual law more vividly conspicuous.

Two passages have been cited by those anxious to disparage the religious value of the Old Testament as proving the similarity of the Hebrew view of expiation to that which has prevailed throughout the heathen world. It is a most remarkable and altogether vital fact, however, that these passages have no reference to a religious act, and are the only two instances in the Old Testament in which *kipper* is thus followed by an accusative of the person to be appeased. The first case occurs in Gen. xxxii. 20. Jacob, returning from exile, and about to meet Esau, sends servants in advance with droves of goats and sheep, camels, and cattle and asses, reasoning thus within himself: "*I will appease him* with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me." The other case occurs in Prov. xvi. 14, "The wrath of a king is as messengers of death, but a wise man *will pacify him.*"<sup>1</sup> The sense of these passages is

<sup>1</sup> If we accept Cheyne's rendering of Isa. xlvii. 11 (Polychrome Bible), it is a good instance of pagan usage. The prophet derides the idea that Babylon will be able to appease "the demon of

clear, and it is in exact accordance with the pagan idea of sacrifice as a pacification of the deity with a view to avert his vengeance. The fact that these passages stand alone and that God is never named in the accusative as the object of the verb *kipper* forbids us to suppose that the idea of pacifying or propitiating Him was included in the law of atonement.

(b) A further fact pointing to the same conclusion is that the law which enjoined atoning sacrifices was set forth as a Divine ordinance. This fact has already been viewed under another aspect, but it deserves further notice. The institution of sacrifice with express orders and promises of forgiveness is in itself a token of readiness to forgive. It denotes that forgiveness is attended with moral dangers; that it can be granted only under conditions which guard the sanctity of law and manifest the purity of God's mercy; and that Divine pardon can be bestowed only when the suppliant draws near in a manner which God can righteously regard with favour. But no less clearly it proves that God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but would rather that all should turn unto Him and live; that because of this He has made plain the way by which He may be approached, and has condescended to devise means of help to human faith; and thus extends the most gracious encouragements to repentance. A God who could act like this was not a God

calamity." The word "demon" is not in the original, but "calamity" stands as the object of the verb.

needing to be appeased or in any way induced to show mercy. Thus the ritual law was in itself a vivid illustration of the Divine Name as this was proclaimed to Moses.

(c) In close connection with this truth, we must note that in all cases where a sin-offering was permitted the utmost care was taken to show that the sacrifice in itself was powerless to take away sin. There was nothing novel in the statement "it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. x. 4). This principle was no doubt lost sight of by many Israelites, but it is never obscured by the ritual law. The terms of each enactment plainly teach that, although a sacrifice is required, or rather is allowed, this offering does not cancel sin. The actual removal of guilt is not effected in the sacrifice, but is the immediate work of God which follows obedience to a prescribed condition. The Levitical formula was: "And the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, *and he shall be forgiven*" (Lev. iv. 26—v. 18). Thus in and through the offering the sin is confessed and laid before God in humble submission to His authority, and with a simple hope in His mercy. There is no room for an attempt to hide or compound for sin; the sacrifice is an appeal presented in a prescribed form, and as a sequel, "God is faithful and righteous to forgive" according to His word.

(d) The most heinous sins were inexorably excluded from the benefits of the ritual law of atone-

ment. In a much misused passage the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews makes the statement, "And according to the law I may almost say all things are cleansed with blood, and, apart from shedding of blood, there is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). Too commonly this verse is quoted as if it expressed an eternal, universal, and immutable law, connecting physical blood-shedding with the remission of sins. This mistake has been often exposed, and attention has most properly been called to the qualifying words, "I might *almost* say," and "*according to the law.*" These words clearly limit the statement to a well-known feature of the Jewish code. But this is only a partial correction. It disproves the universality of the proposition, and leaves it to stand as a simple exposition of an historical fact; but it seems to imply, or, at any rate, leaves room for the inference, that while the legal dispensation was in force there was no remission, or scarcely any remission, of sin apart from blood-shedding.

But this inference is contradicted by obvious facts, for, with four well-known exceptions, which serve to emphasise the principle, no blood-shedding was allowed on account of any wilful transgression.<sup>1</sup> Instead of God demanding to be propitiated or satisfied by sacrifice before extending mercy to transgressors, He allowed sacrifice to be offered on His altars only for sins of ignorance or infirmity. Great transgressions were left to be dealt with as He saw fit, and for these no pledge of forgiveness was

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 22.



embodied in a legal covenant. Two great crimes, viz., murder and adultery, were not only not atonable under the ritual law, but were specifically excluded from its scope. "Ye shall take no atonement for the life of a manslayer which is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death" (Num. xxxv. 31). "The adulterer and adulteress shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xx. 10).

The moral basis of this legislation is not obscure. The ritual code was a part of the national law, and thus religious teaching was intermixed with civil discipline. It provided a legal sanction for a merciful administration of laws which would have become an intolerable yoke if enforced without any consideration for human frailty and ignorance. Hence sin-offerings were allowed in cases where mercy was favourable to individual discipline and to public order. They also instilled the thought that men must give an account to God for all their actions, small and great, and that human tribunals were not final courts of appeal, so that human mercy could not grant absolution apart from Divine sanction and confirmation. *For sins of ignorance and infirmity God could concede a legal covenant of forgiveness, because no such covenant could conceivably become an indulgence to commit sin.* The man who dared to commit an offence because the ritual law permitted a sacrifice for sins of ignorance cheated himself, because he thereby shut himself out of the law, and cut himself off from the promise by doing the wrong

thing wilfully. Such a covenant, therefore, could not become a constructive permission to sin with impunity. That this was clearly perceived by intelligent Israelites is proved by notable Jewish sayings, *e.g.*, "He who says 'I will sin, the Day atones,' to him the Day will bring no atonement."<sup>1</sup>

But if the law had contained a pledge of forgiveness for wilful sin, feebly conditioned by a demand for sacrifice, evil men would have been able to calculate upon immunity from punishment, and the ritual code would have become the most corrupting and anarchical instrument of unrighteousness which even Satanic ingenuity could have invented. Hence the stern disallowance of sacrifice in any case of deliberate transgression, with the four remarkable exceptions to which reference has been made.

This presents to us a sharply-defined dilemma. Either there was no remission of any wilful sins (with the exceptions just mentioned) while the Hebrew legislation was in force, or they were remitted apart from the law and without the ritual shedding of blood.

This dilemma is grave, and to unprepared minds it may be painful, but it raises no real difficulty. No man imagines that for many centuries God actually shut up His tender mercies within the narrow limits of a legal covenant, nor can any reader of the Old Testament suppose that true worshippers ever entertained such an awful idea of the Divine Being. During the entire period,

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Biblica*, col. 387.

faith in the Divine Name sustained the lives of erring men, and caused them to hope for Salvation. What we truly call "The Gospel" came by Jesus Christ, but there was always a gospel which in substance declared: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. lv. 6, 7). Faith in the freeness of God's mercy produced a devotional literature which still remains the best language of the human heart in the struggles of repentance, and for the utterance of those yearnings for peace with God which agitate all contrite souls. Believing themselves forgiven, men were inspired to sing aloud not merely of God's mercy but of His *righteousness* (Psal. li. 14) in forgiving iniquities, transgressions and sins for which no remission was provided in the law of sacrifice. David, though condemned to die by the law which reigned over kings and people alike, was assured by the prophet Nathan that God had forgiven him his double crime of adultery and murder. Whether he wrote the 51st Psalm or not, it was written by a man convicted of blood-guiltiness; and in strictest harmony with the ritual code the singer confessed that God would accept no sacrifice from him, except the spiritual sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart. No Christian can doubt that flagrant sins were freely remitted while the Hebrew law remained in force; and when the facts are duly recognised, it becomes manifest that the worst sins,

when forgiven at all, were forgiven "apart from the law," and in the exercise of a Divine prerogative which the ritual law left unimpaired and unlimited. This prerogative of forgiveness is so absolutely sovereign and so sacred, that no rites or ceremonies could be allowed to influence it, or even apparently influence it in the remotest possible way. In other words, we are driven to the conclusion that all the worst sins which were remitted while the ritual law was in force were remitted without the shedding of blood. Thus by all it allowed and by all it forbade this law taught the same great lesson as was taught by the prophets, viz., that all attempts to buy mercy, to compound for iniquity, to appease God's anger against sin, or to induce Him to forego just judgment, are an abomination in His sight; and that sacrifices, when offered by men whose hands are stained with blood or spotted by any wilful sins, are even more detestable to Him than the sins they are designed to cover.

It may not be superfluous to point out that there is nothing in the facts or inferences thus presented which tends to cast doubt upon the necessity, or to depreciate the value of the sacrifice of Christ. We cannot effectively deal with this subject until we come to New Testament teachings; but I may so far anticipate a future study as to indicate two fundamental differences between the sacrifice of Christ and the sin-offerings of the law.

(1) Christ was obviously not an offering prepared

and presented by guilty men to God, but a sacrifice made by God at His own expense on behalf of His sinful creatures. Hence it is impossible for sinners to imagine that they themselves are inducing God to show mercy, or that they are compounding for their crimes in founding their hopes on what was done at Calvary. They may and do make grievous mistakes respecting the nature of Christ's atonement, but they cannot delude themselves by thinking that *they themselves* are offering Christ to God. If criminals of all kinds had been allowed to offer sacrifices in the Jewish Temple with a view to obtain mercy, this would have fostered in Israel the awful thought, which pervaded the pagan world, that the Deity could be bribed and persuaded into clemency. Kings and rich men would have slaughtered flocks and herds, and burned forests on their altars to atone for wanton wickedness. The greater their guilt the more numerous and costly would have been their oblations, and all thought of God's righteousness in showing mercy would have been extinguished. But there is no risk of this awful delusion being fostered by Christ's death, even when regarded as effecting a change in God's mind.

(2) A further and most vital difference between the sacrifice of Christ and the sin-offerings of the Temple is set forth by the writer to the Hebrews. He plainly declares that there was no moral virtue in the blood of beasts (Heb. x. 4). The animals slain on Jewish altars were powerless "to give the guilty conscience peace, or wash away one stain,"

because they were involuntary victims, and their sufferings made no appeal except to human pity. But the blood of Christ has power to touch the conscience.

The foregoing discussion more than justifies the assertion that the etymological force of the word *kipper* is not only lost but is practically reversed in its special religious use in the Old Testament. The change of meaning thus exhibited is one of the most remarkable of the many startling transformations with which philologists are familiar. It would be unprofitable to spend much time in speculating on the means by which this change was brought about, but we are on sure ground when we say that it could only take place in connection with a corresponding transformation of religious ideas, of which the general character and order of progress can be safely surmised.

Man's instinct is to hide his misdeeds from the knowledge of the Great Judge. When consciously unable to thus hide his fault, his next thought is to make up for it, to make some sort of compensation, to do something or give something to God by way of satisfying His anger. Usually his thought is that by inflicting on himself some great pain or deprivation he may avert Divine vengeance. Accompanying, and in time confirming this process of thought, secondary meanings of "cover" would naturally become current, such as we have in the English language, *e.g.*, "to counterbalance," "to cover

a loss," *i.e.*, by compensation, or by lodging securities, &c. In this way the word would readily pass into religious terminology to denote sacrifices of the ordinary heathen type which are offered to induce God to forego punishment.

Recent investigators into the history of Semitic religion claim, not unfairly, to have established an intimate connection between ancient idolatrous customs and the Ritual Code. The fact of this intimate connection seems also to be confirmed by the facility with which the pre-Exilian Hebrews lapsed into the customs of their heathen neighbours, and by the persistency with which they perverted their own sacrificial system in spite of the scathing denunciations of the prophets. The precise relation which the lawful sacrifices of the Hebrews bore to ancient ancestral rites, and to the customs of contemporary peoples, must for the present be open to debate. It will scarcely be disputed, however, that the legal sacrifices were designed to be corrective of false ideas, and specifically of false ideas of God, and of God's attitude towards sin.

Many considerations favour the opinion that while the sacrificial cultus of the Hebrews was designed to thus teach certain fundamental religious and ethical principles, it was also so framed as to minimise the actual practice of sacrifice to the lowest possible degree consistent with its educational purpose. The restriction imposed on the place where sacrifices might be offered, on the persons who might lawfully present it, and, above all, the jealous

way in which the scope and value of sacrifice were reduced, all point to the conclusion that the Temple service was meant to play a very minor part in the common life of the people. Indeed, according to the Levitical code, a vast portion of the people must of necessity have passed through life without even once beholding a lawful sacrifice, and to all but a very few participation in the Temple service must have been exceedingly rare. The fact that Christ has for ever abolished sacrifice from the order of human worship is also an assurance that, apart from a preparatory and therefore transient educational purpose, there is nothing in sacrifices of the ancient type which can render them tolerable in God's sight.<sup>1</sup>

#### PROPITIATION IN THE SEPTUAGINT VERSION.

We may now pass from the study of the Hebrew technical term to a brief examination of the manner in which it was treated in the most ancient of all known translations. In the time of our Lord the Septuagint version had widely displaced the Hebrew even in Palestine, and among the Hellenised Jews it was accepted with veneration as verbally inspired.<sup>2</sup>

An exhaustive review of the Septuagint renderings is not called for, but we cannot overestimate the importance of a clear knowledge of the great principles by which the authors of the Greek version

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 23.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Note 24.



were governed in presenting their sacred writings to the pagan world. A knowledge of the terms they selected, and of the mode in which they treated them, throws a flood of light on the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures as interpreted by learned Jews before the dawn of Christianity. Incidentally, it may also serve to illustrate the probable manner in which the change in the significance of *kipper* took place in an age which was probably earlier than that of the writing prophets. Above all, it is supremely important, because the Greek version was familiar to the authors of the New Testament, and did much to prepare a religious vocabulary for their use.

Philo tells us that the authors of the Septuagint version found precise equivalents in Greek for the terms employed in their native language, so that they were able to give a perfectly literal translation, and to impart their Divine revelation with clearness and vigour. To a great extent this high praise may be endorsed, but unless prepared to approve his theory of miraculous assistance, we must recognise the extreme difficulty of their task. They must have been peculiarly perplexed in selecting equivalent terms for *kipper* and its cognates. Two courses were before them for choice. (1) They might render the Hebrew verb by such terms as *kalupto*, or *epikalupto*, and the corresponding substantive by *pōma*, or *epithema*, and by so doing they would have strictly preserved the etymological force of their original terms for Greek readers. Josephus pre-

ferred this plan when giving an account of Jewish antiquities to the outer world. (2) They might adopt words familiar to the Greeks as connected with religious worship, and specifically with sacrifice.

It is highly suggestive that the LXX translators rejected the first of these expedients. They used the verb to cover (*kalupto*) in translating *kāsāh* in the passages recently cited, viz.: Job xxxi. 33; Psal. xxxii. 1, 5; Prov. xvii. 9, xxviii. 13, &c.; but they never used this or kindred words to represent *kipper*. The only fair inference to be drawn from this fact is that in the judgment of these Hebrew translators the etymological force of *kipper* had been entirely lost in its special religious use, and that therefore any attempt to reproduce it in a foreign language would be misleading.

In adopting the second alternative they of course ran the serious risk of seeming to identify the sin-offerings of the Hebrew law with the sacrifices offered to pagan deities. The principal term selected (*hilaskesthai* alone or in a strengthened form) undoubtedly signifies to appease, to conciliate or even to bribe; but in the face of the obvious danger which afterwards frightened Josephus, they chose the technical sacrificial terms which were in current use among Greek-speaking pagans.

It is eminently desirable to ascertain, if possible, the reasons which determined this remarkable decision, and to fairly estimate its significance. At first sight it appears to sanction the common opinion that the translators were anxious to show

the similarity of Jewish and Greek sacrifices, as endeavours to appease an offended Deity, but on closer inspection this impression will be not only dissipated but reversed.

Dr. James Morison pointed out that Josephus departed from the LXX model, and ascribed this fact to his recreant desire to conceal the true character of the Jewish ritual from his cultured foreign readers. He also contrasts the meanness of Josephus in this respect with the frankness and boldness of the first translators. I should be sorry to undertake the defence of Josephus, who deserved the contempt of his countrymen, but in regard to his rendering of *kipper* I can only blame him for adopting a less sagacious method than the LXX. That he strove rather to contrast than compare Judaism and paganism is undeniable, and that to some extent he succeeded must be allowed. But in this endeavour he was not peculiar, and was surpassed by those who, having the same object, chose less obvious but more effective means. It is regrettable that so keen a critic as Morison failed to inform his readers that, while pagan terms are employed in the LXX, the utmost care was taken to prevent its readers from inferring that the sacrifices of Jerusalem were similar to those which reeked on the altars of Phœnicia, Greece and Rome. The altered sense in which classical sacrificial terms were employed was vividly displayed by a rigorous reproduction of the unique grammatical forms which were distinctive marks of Hebrew religion. That the

most scrupulous exactitude in this regard was imperfectly appreciated in ancient times must be admitted; but this can only be attributed to the beclouding effect of preconceived ideas, which operated then, as we see them operating to-day, to bedim the vision of both critical and uncritical readers. If the literary phenomena of the LXX version have been overlooked or misinterpreted, it is not the fault of the men who produced it.

The exactitude with which the LXX follows the original is exemplified by the fact that only thrice does *hilaskesthai* appear in the LXX as it is always found in classic Greek, viz., as followed by the accusative of the person to be appeased. Of these three exceptional cases two correspond to the Hebrew already reviewed—*i.e.*, Gen. xxxii. 20 and Prov. xvi. 14—and in neither case is God referred to, or any religious act described.

In the third case, which occurs in Zech. vii. 2, the pagan formula is undoubtedly used to denote what the translators regarded as a proposed attempt to propitiate the Lord, and on this account the passage is absolutely unique in the Old Testament, as known to Hebrew and Greek readers. The Hebrew verb in this place might be literally rendered to stroke down or smooth any one's face, and hence to appease, conciliate, or soothe. It is used in this sense with some suggestion of sycophancy in Job xi. 19, Prov. xix. 6, and Psal. xlv. 12, but nowhere else does the Septuagint employ the technical religious term as its equivalent. The question arises,

Why was it used in Zech. vii. 2? No reasonable explanation can be given, except the very simple one, that the translators wished to make it evident that in their judgment the object of the deputation from Bethel was actually "to propitiate God." They considered that these men, and the people who sent them, supposed that God could be, and required to be, appeased by sacrifice, and were anxious to thus court His favour. Hence they put the name of God in the accusative as the object of the verb, as was necessary to express this idea, just as we find it in Gen. xxxii. 20 and Prov. xvi. 14.

Our English translators have not followed their most ancient predecessors in this course, but represent the errand of the men of Bethel as simply "to pray" (A.V.) or "to intreat" (R.V.) the Lord, and to inquire of the priests at Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> We need not stay to discuss their wisdom, but, in estimating the significance of LXX usage, we must note the fact that in this, the only instance in which it conforms to pagan usage by making God the object of the verb to propitiate, it is describing an action which Zechariah heard of with indignation and vigorously denounced. The chapter is remarkable as one of the most trenchant condemnations in the Old Testament of the impious notion of placating God by ceremonial observances. It is not absolutely clear that the LXX rendering can be justified, but it is clear as noonday that whatever the men of

<sup>1</sup> Young's "Literal Translation of the Bible" reads "to appease the face of the Lord."

Bethel did, or meant to do if allowed, they were benighted, and at least semi-paganised strangers to the Temple service ; and their perverted notions of worship, which were condemned by the prophet, can only affect our interpretation of the ritual law, as crimes may assist us to define the laws of which they are sinful violations.<sup>1</sup>

The uniform avoidance of the only idiom by which the idea of appeasing God could be expressed, except for its condemnation in Zech. vii. 2, is conclusive evidence that the LXX translators regarded the idea itself as obnoxious ; but this is made more obvious by their defiance of classical usage in a still more extraordinary fashion. Preserving closely the grammatical forms which they found in Hebrew, they sometimes set down the object requiring Divine clemency in the accusative as itself the object of the verb to propitiate. It is difficult to imagine the amazement with which Greek readers must have been filled when they first met with this paradoxical construction. They would say, We know what is meant by conciliating or appeasing the gods, but what are we to understand by such sentences as these ? “ Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people . . . to blot out iniquities and to *propitiate iniquities* ” (Dan. ix. 24), “ and ye shall propitiate the house ” and “ the holy place ” (Ezek. xlv. 18, 20), “ the altar ” (xliii. 22, 26), or “ propitiate sins ” (Ecclus. iii. 3), “ He shall propitiate the sanctuary ” (Lev. xvi. 16). Even to ourselves this mode of

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 25.

expression is remarkable. It is indeed so peculiar and so utterly incompatible with the ordinary idea of propitiation, that our translators have not ventured to reproduce it. Had they not concealed this startling language by substituting the more usual formula "to make atonement for iniquities," "for the house," &c., English readers would have been compelled to reconsider their ideas. But what modern Englishmen shrank from doing, the LXX translators, writing in the midst of heathen people, dared not flinch from, and thus, in a far more startling fashion than Josephus selected, they challenged the worshippers of evil-minded deities to note the difference between the merciful and gracious God of Israel and the imaginary objects of their fear.

The ordinary form of speech adopted in the Hebrew Scriptures is less remarkable, but equally significant, and was carefully reproduced in the LXX, where the verb to propitiate is commonly followed by prepositions (*περὶ* or *ὑπὲρ*), which point out the person or thing needing an atonement. Had this been the only peculiarity it would have been inexplicable to a pagan reader, apart from some instruction in the religious ideas and customs of the Jews. This common formula when translated into English excites no surprise in our minds, but it is none the less a distinctive feature of the Hebrew faith and has no counterpart in any heathen literature. Taken together the daring innovations of the LXX demonstrate the fact that in adopting pagan sacrificial terms the Jewish scholars of Alexandria

stamped upon them an entirely new meaning, and thus solved the problem how to translate their law of sacrifice to the minds and consciences of peoples who thought that God was altogether like themselves. By electing to carry out this courageous plan they entitled themselves to the praise and gratitude of mankind. By the very terms in which they translated the Levitical code they presented to the world a unique Theism, and confirmed the doctrine of the prophets that such sacrifices as those which reeked on foreign altars were an abomination in God's sight. Had they, like Josephus in after days, timidly reproduced in Greek the etymological force of *kipper*, they would have used terms which conveyed to the Gentiles no clear idea, but would have suggested a false one which had no place in their own religious system. By adopting the bolder course they avoided all ambiguity, and have left behind them a perpetual testimony to the freeness and spontaneity of God's grace.

#### PROPITIATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The writers of the New Testament closely followed the LXX in refraining from any attempt to reproduce the primitive idea of "covering" when referring to Atonement or Propitiation. They used *kalupto* in quoting or alluding to passages where the LXX employed it, as already explained,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Rom. iv. 7 with Psal. xxxii. 1. James v. 20, and 1 Pet. iv. 8 with Prov. x. 12.



in places where the thought of literal covering is distinct,<sup>1</sup> but this renders their avoidance of it in connection with the work of Christ the more conspicuous.

The passages in which *hilaskesthai* or its derivatives appear are so few that we may review them all.

In one of His parables Christ makes the publican to say, "O God be *merciful* to me a sinner" (Luke xviii. 13). It is obvious, however, that the man made no attempt to conciliate God by sacrifice, but prayed as to one believed to be gracious and ready to answer human prayer.

In Heb. ii. 17 the verb is followed by an accusative of the object, but in a fashion which, to a pagan, would have seemed preposterous. Strictly translated, this verse would read that Christ was a "high priest in things pertaining to God to propitiate the sins of the people" (τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ). English translators have not dared to reproduce this form, or it might have done something to excite reflection and inquiry. There would be nothing startling, however, to well-instructed Hebrew readers, for the same expression appears, as we have already seen, in the LXX.

The above are the only two places in which the verb occurs in the New Testament, but the substantive *hilasmos* is used in I. John ii. 2, iv. 10, and the derivative *hilasterion* in Rom. iii. 25, Heb. ix. 5. This rare employment of the term in any of its forms

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mat. viii. 24, x. 26. Luke viii. 16, xxiii. 30. II. Cor. iv. 3.

is remarkable, and becomes more so when we deduct Luke xviii. 13, and Heb. ix. 5 (which merely names the Jewish mercy seat historically), as irrelevant to the present discussion. Having already dealt with Heb. ii. 17, we have only three passages to examine.

The language of I. John ii. 2 leaves no room for the supposition that the idea of conciliating God is intended. The use of the abstract *hilasmos* in the statement that "*He is the propitiation for our sins,*" indicates that the person of Christ is the subject of the sentence, and not merely what He has done or is doing. So also the use of the present tense forbids us to look back to any particular period or moment of His career. John does not say that Christ was a propitiation while living or when dying; but, writing many years after the ascension, and proclaiming that we have now in Him a *paracletos* with God, he goes on to strengthen faith in the virtue of His advocacy by declaring "And He is the propitiation for our sins" (*περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν*), and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." By this statement he proclaims that Jesus Christ, who was dead and is alive again for evermore, contains in Himself all the conditions of a righteous dispensation of mercy to mankind.

We have already honoured the wisdom and courage of the translators of the Old Testament in using a pagan sacrificial term, and we are therefore prepared to appreciate the reasons which must have weighed with John in following their example. It is manifest that the relations between a loving

God and sinful men have little in common with those supposed by the heathen to exist between themselves and their deities, yet it must be acknowledged that they are alike in one important respect. However conceived, man's relations with the Deity have confessedly been strained by offences, and stand in need of readjustment. Hence, although the means and conditions of peacemaking must be as different as are the character of God and the characters portrayed in Greek mythology; yet Jesus Christ the righteous is most fitly put before the world as filling a place between erring men and God, which, *mutatis mutandis*, corresponds to that which superstition assigned to the sacrifices offered on heathen altars: *i.e.*, Christ was set before the world as a mediator, who contained in Himself everything necessary to effect a reconciliation between sinful men and a righteous God.

John does not formally explain, nor does the word *hilasmos* unfold the reason, why the glorified Christ can be thus regarded, but this reason is not obscurely given in the context. Believers in Christ, while striving against sin, are still conscious of failure and defects, and because of this their hearts condemn them, and they lose confidence towards God. To reassure their minds, John bids them think of Jesus Christ as one who is their friend and representative with the Father, and for the relief of sensitive consciences he adds the epithet righteous, "Jesus Christ the righteous." He thus accentuates the truth that we have no immoral pleader, no advo-

cate who thinks more of our deliverance from punishment than of our cleansing from sin and the purgation of God's universe. His plea for mercy is not only consistent with, but springs from, His interest in righteousness, and is as truly identified with His zeal for the Divine will as with His compassion for human infirmity. Christ is not only a strictly righteous advocate who will ask for nothing which would relax the cords of moral obligation or weaken the authority of God; but on account of all He has revealed Himself to be, and of all He has done and suffered, He is such a living and resplendent vindication of God's righteousness in showing mercy, that in view of Him all misapprehension of the Father's pardoning grace is universally and eternally precluded.

Thus the truly awful danger which attends the exercise, and especially the public exercise, of mercy, is obviated. No sinner who receives forgiveness through Him who died to put away sin can be led to think lightly of sin, nor can moral beings, human or angelic, who behold God's ways to others, imagine that the remission of sins by, or through, Jesus Christ the righteous, imports that God can condone, or tolerate, or in the slightest degree lessen his inexorable hatred of evil.

The language of I. John iv. 10 not only corroborates this interpretation, but contains additional elements which alone would suffice to differentiate the Christian idea of *hilasmos* from anything which Paganism ever conceived. The sending of Christ to

be a propitiation is set forth by John as an act of Divine love, and as constituting in itself a new revelation of what love is. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. Herein was the love of God manifested in our case, that God hath sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live in Him. Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and sent His Son (to be) the propitiation for our sins." The love thus expressed in deeds is a reality which transcends the sublimest human ideals, and it forbids the supposition that He who thus reveals His nature can require to be conciliated.

Attempts are made to escape the force of this argument by the plea, that although the propitiation was not needed to induce love, it was required in order to set God free to exercise His love towards sinners. But this expedient is futile because the gift of Christ is expressly proclaimed to be itself an exercise of the Father's love for sinners, and no greater exercise of love could be imagined.

Dr. Morison in his great monograph on Rom. iii. has clothed the self-contradictory idea I deprecate in what is probably the most plausible drapery it ever wore. He first and lengthily insists that God's offended feelings were placated, and His anger turned away by Christ's propitiation, and then with conscious weakness adds, "But let it ever be borne in mind that it was in virtue of a self-originated desire in the Divine heart—a *desire to be willing to forgive*—that God Himself devised the scheme of pro-

propitiation" (p. 305). How much simpler, more Scriptural it would have been, had he written, that God Himself devised the scheme of propitiation because He was "ready to forgive," because it is His nature to be gracious. The words, a "desire to be willing to forgive" may truly describe the condition of an imperfect man, who recognises that forgiveness is a duty, and desires to do what is right, but is still conscious of a hard and unrelenting spirit. He confesses this with shame, and hopes at length to conquer his unwillingness, but cannot pretend to have conquered yet, because he is not willing to forgive, but he desires to be willing. Probably all but the most infantile Christians have passed through such an experience, but self-reproach should teach us that a similar struggle can have no place in God. How weak and even absurd such an expression would read as a substitute for the delightful words of Psal. lxxxvi. 5, "Unto Thee do I lift up my soul, for Thou art good and *ready to forgive*, and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee." How fraught with doubt and fear and sinister suggestion would this verse have been if it had run, "for Thou art good, and desirest to be willing to forgive!" Wish and will, aspiration and attainment are too frequently at variance with us, but God can have no such schism in His nature, and we can only trace His redemptive action to the disposition which Paul speaks of as a reason why prayer should be made for all men, including such monsters as the Emperor Nero. "This is good and acceptable in the sight

of God our Saviour, who willeth ( $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota$ ) that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4). We cannot translate  $\theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota$  "He desires to be willing," nor can we imagine such an impotent condition of mind being proposed as a reason for universal intercession by the Church.

Paul's use of the word *hilasterion* (Rom. iii. 20) has given rise to much discussion. Many writers regard it as a substantive to denote a propitiatory sacrifice but this appears to be a gratuitous assumption founded on a misreading of one or two passages in Greek authors. Others, including Morison, regard it as used adjectivally to denote the propitiatory quality of Christ. The more general and probably the correct opinion is that Paul adopted it from the LXX, and so transferred the name of the ancient Mercy Seat to Christ as the spiritual reality of which that was a shadow.

The most important point for immediate notice is that Paul agrees with John, and with the ancient law, in ascribing redemption to the Divine initiative. God set forth Jesus "to be a propitiation." Paul therefore knows of no propitiation which has God for its *object*, but only of one which has God for its *author*. In striking harmony with John he also accentuates the revelation of righteousness, and specifically the righteousness of God in forgiving. This righteousness of God is according to Paul the central principle declared and demonstrated in and by the propitiation which God provides. God had been passing over the sins of many throughout all ages, and in

various ways He had guarded His mercy against presumptuous abuse. But no words and no ritual could adequately demonstrate that the source and object of all mercy was righteousness, and not mere pity or personal favour. The setting forth of Christ before the world (and possibly before the universe) threw light on God's ways in the past, and throws light for ever on the transactions prefigured by the ceremonial of communion with the invisible tenant of the Mercy Seat. In the blood of Him who suffered for our sins we have not only the inviolable seal of a covenant to forgive, but an eternal pledge that the covenant itself is righteous; so that in the language of John "God is faithful *and righteous* to forgive us our sins" when we come to Him confessing our faultiness and reconciled to His character and will by faith in Jesus Christ.

It is supremely important to observe that there is nothing in this passage which can be tortured into a suggestion that Christ did or suffered anything whereby He made it righteous for God to remit sin. I express myself thus broadly because writers who apparently shrink from affirming in plain terms that Christ bore the punishment of our sins nevertheless use language which means the same thing, or something which is indistinguishable from it.<sup>1</sup> When it is said that Christ accepted our liabilities, or undertook our responsibilities as transgressors of the law, and thus made satisfaction to God, and thereby rendered the remission of sins right-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 26.



eously possible, this appears to be merely a hesitant or euphemistic way of asserting, that He endured what is due to us as law breakers, *i.e.*, the penalty of death. There may be some valid distinction in the minds of those who thus express themselves, but it is too subtle for my discernment. Whatever may be meant by these or other similar expressions, we may meet them all by denying in the most categorical way that Christ is here said to have suffered anything to make it righteous for God to remit sin. Such a thought is not only not expressed, but is absolutely excluded by the terms which Paul employs. Christ is distinctly said to have been "set forth (*προέθετο*) to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to shew (or for the shewing, or the proving, or, best of all, for the demonstration of) His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God; for the shewing (or the demonstration) of His righteousness at this present season: that He might be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus."

That no English reader may question whether the rendering, "the shewing," or "the demonstration" of righteousness is too strong, it may be mentioned that the same term (*ἔνδειξις*) is found in 2 Cor. viii. 24, where Paul writes, "Shew ye therefore unto them in the face of the Church the proof of your love." And in Phil. i. 28 where it is translated "*an evident token.*" By this unmistakable term, therefore, we are forbidden to think that the

passing by of sin only became righteous in consequence of Christ's death. Before the righteousness of an act can be shown, or proved, or demonstrated, it must actually be righteous in itself. To say that a demonstration of a thing, or a quality, can produce a thing, or confer the quality demonstrated, is absurd. We might as well say that one of Euclid's demonstrations renders a proposition true, or that the proving of an arithmetical calculation makes it correct, or that the proof of a prisoner's innocence renders him innocent, as affirm that the demonstration of God's righteousness in Christ makes righteous a treatment of sinners, which would otherwise have been unjust.

▷ As previously seen, the two chief hindrances to a free and widespread dispensation of mercy lie not in any unreadiness in God to forgive, nor in any moral antagonism between justice and mercy. Speaking broadly, the first great hindrance lies in the moral obtuseness of men, which prevents a perception of the true nature and enormity of sin, and so renders confession, contrition, repentance, and submission to God impossible, and apart from these moral conditions, there would be no mercy in pardon. The second great hindrance lies in the strength of a convicted sinner's remorseful consciousness of ill-desert, which seems to preclude the possibility of a righteous forgiveness. Surveying the history of revelation, we see that it was necessary to deal with the former of these hindrances by the revelation of

God's righteous hatred of sin in law and in severity of discipline. Afterwards, when law had done all that it had power to accomplish, it became possible and necessary to deal with the second great hindrance, which the discipline of law had augmented; and thus Christ was set forth to demonstrate the righteousness of God in the remission of sins.

It is not suggested that these two hindrances, or the forces employed for their removal, are historically, or in individual experience, divisible into two sharply defined stages. The age of law was relieved and lightened by assurances of mercy, and the age of Gospel light, the age of mercy, is still under the instructive discipline of God's commandments. The law which was intended to awe and constrain men to obedience, contained an implicit Gospel, not only in its demand for love, but also in its ceremonial, which always taught that there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. The cross, as we have seen, is the most potent and convincing evidence of man's iniquity and of God's hatred of sin. God's claim upon our obedience suffers no abatement under the Gospel, and the verification of this truth adds much to the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to produce faith in God's righteousness. But the distinctive and supreme function of the cross is, as Paul preaches in the verses before us, to become a proof, an evident token, an absolute demonstration of God's righteousness in forgiving the sins of all who called upon His Name in former ages, and in

pardoning the sins of all who, in this present age, believe the testimony of the blood of Jesus, and call upon His Name as thus more resplendently revealed.

It is lamentable that Dr. Sanday in his Commentary on Romans, which in most respects is admirable, has lent the sanction of his name to the dictum that "when we ask, Who is propitiated? the answer can only be, God" (p. 91). He does not give any distinct reason for the assertion, and frankly allows that he cannot interpret the word in such a connection, and that no human thinker can hope to achieve such a task. It is "a word which we must leave it to Him to interpret" (p. 94). I quite agree with Dr. Sanday that no man is, or ever will be, able to interpret the word "propitiation" in a Christian spirit, if, in spite of grammatical forms and idioms, we persist in declaring that God is the person to be propitiated. If we will but take the language of Scripture in its clear and natural sense, the word needs no further interpretation, but is in itself an interpretation of God. Divine revelation does not deal in terms which convey no meaning to our minds.

Still more lamentable is a further statement made by this author, viz., that "All mercy, all forgiveness, is of the nature of fiction"! (p. 94).

That there is nothing fictitious in forgiveness is demonstrated by the fact that the idea of forgiveness includes the idea of sin, and as long as a pardoned creature retains a grateful sense of God's

mercy, he will continue to pronounce a condemnation on himself. Nothing but sin can be forgiven, and the new song to be sung in Heaven will remain an eternal recognition of the truth of God's judgments. Ritschl has well said that the sinner's "recollection of his transgression, with its indirect excitation of pain, will form a guarantee that the presupposed fact of guilt is not unweraciously negated by pardon."<sup>1</sup>

These thoughts find a strong support and confirmation in Paul's use of other terms to express the idea of reconciliation, viz., *katallasso* and *katallagē*.

The fundamental passage is II. Cor. v. 18—20. Without discussing every vexed question of interpretation the outstanding features of this passage may be clearly stated. The foremost fact is presented in the unmistakable words, "All things are of God." God is the eternal source of blessing. He is the author of the gospel, the doer of all saving works for man. It was "God who reconciled us to Himself," and He did this "through Christ." In all Christ did He was God's agent. But God deigns to employ other agents in the same great business. He has committed to us "the ministry of reconciliation." It is our function to proclaim the glorious truth that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself"; and this constitutes the reconciling message. Thus Christian preachers "are ambassadors" entrusted with the honour of

<sup>1</sup> *Justification*, i. 14.

speaking to their fellow-men about Christ. When they plead, it is "as though God were intreating." Hence Paul writes that in pursuance of this commission, and as voices for God, "we beseech you on behalf of Christ be ye reconciled to God . . . and working together with Him we intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." Thus Paul implores men to yield themselves up to the reconciling influences of all that God has done in Christ. He beseeches them not only as fellow-men to lay aside their enmity, but to hear his entreaties as God's own appeal, just as the words of an ambassador are the words of the king who speaks through his lips.

Efforts are made to evade the natural significance of such language. Cremer makes the extraordinary assertion that "In *καταλλάσσειν* stress is laid upon the truth that God stands over against mankind as the adversary." There would be some ground for this opinion if the idea of reconciliation necessarily included the mutual hostility of two parties, but we know that enmity is often one-sided, and the suggestion that God is man's adversary is a flagrant contradiction of this passage, in which God is proclaimed to be the great reconciler of men to Himself. Peter tells us that the Devil is our adversary, who appropriately goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But how could an adversary be said to dwell in one who "went about doing good," who earned for Himself the title "the Friend of Sinners," and at last laid down His life for our sakes?

In order to avoid a recognition of the fact that this

passage is inconsistent with the idea of God being reconciled to man by the propitiation of Christ, strenuous attempts are made to exclude from the passage any reference to subjective reconciliation. If this element could be banished it would still remain true that reconciliation originates in God and is effected by means which He Himself employs for the purpose. But the subjective change cannot be eliminated without emptying the passage of all meaning. Paul refers to reconciliation as a fact of his own experience, and he entreats his readers to respond to God's appeal in Christ. It is certain, therefore, that the subjective change by which God's enemies become His friends is the most prominent though not the sole idea in Paul's mind.

Thus repeatedly and in various ways everything is traced up to the spontaneous, unsolicited, and amazing grace of God. God was in Christ, and He is behind every human preacher who proclaims the gospel and pleads with his fellow-men. In Christ God has taken the initiative in making peace, but reconciliation is not consummated until the terms of peace are embraced by His revolted creatures, so that His adversaries are subdued to submit themselves to His sway.

The passage in Rom. v. 10, 11, is little less important and equally clear. In the first verse peace as a state of relationship with God is attributed to faith.<sup>1</sup> Faith is not magnified as a merit or set up as an independent activity of man's mind. On the contrary it has both its object and its origin in

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 27.

God, who delivered up Jesus "for our trespasses" and raised Him up "for our justification." Nevertheless, without faith there is no peace with God. This fundamental passage therefore forbids us to understand the word reconciliation in verses 10 and 11 as denoting merely a new relation set up by God irrespective of man's response. Reconciliation is the process which issues in the state of "peace *with God*" referred to in verse 1. It is represented as a divinely initiated process by which God's enemies have had their antipathy and dread removed, and so have learned to put their trust in Him as their Father and Friend.

If this view were left doubtful by the context an unprejudiced study of the literary structure of verses 10 and 11 should certify its accuracy. "If . . . *we were reconciled* to God by the death of His Son . . . we shall be saved by His life." Here reconciliation by death and salvation by life are antithetic, and as salvation is a personal experience the reconciliation which precedes and leads up to it must be the same. So read the thought is strong and luminous. Nothing less than the death of Christ could effect our reconciliation, but no further sacrifice is required to complete our salvation. The thought thus expounded naturally and beautifully leads to the glowing words, "and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." Indisputably this "rejoicing" is subjective, and it is given as a step beyond mere recon-



ciliation or the bare assurance of salvation. Paul declares that those who once were hostile to God have not only had their enmity overcome, but have in the God they dreaded an object of affection and delight. We are not only at peace with God, but we rejoice in Him, and this joy is all the work of Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and Omega. He is the author and the finisher of faith, who crowns His conquest of God's foes by filling them with a joy which is unspeakable. The verb *katallasso* is only found elsewhere in I. Cor. vii. 11, where it denotes the actual return of a wife to her husband, (which corresponds to the subjective reconciliation of men to God.) This has been disputed, but no objection can stand. The actual return is more than a subjective change, but necessarily presupposes and includes it. Paul is not speaking of an arrangement, made for the parties by some external authority, which legally re-unites them irrespective of their assent, but of the wife's renewed acceptance of marital relations.

The verb appears in a strengthened form in Eph. ii. 16, where the subject of the apostle is the double reconciliation of Jew and Gentile to each other and to God. The passage speaks of Christ as Himself our Peace, because He had broken down the middle wall of partition which had been erected in the national law and ordinances of Israel, so that peace with God might be offered on equal terms to all peoples. The cross is made prominent as the efficient instrumentality employed for the making of peace between man and man and between

man and God ; but the object of Christ as a peacemaker is not fully attained apart from a due reception of the blessing which is proffered in the gospel. Thus, as in Rom. iii., so here, man is reconciled to God, not only potentially by Christ's work for mankind, but actually, through the power exerted by the cross to bring men through repentance and faith into personal relations with each other and with God.

The same strengthened verb occurs in Col. i. 20, 21. Here the initiative is traced to the "good pleasure" of the Father, who caused all fulness to dwell in Christ with a view to the reconciliation of "all things to Himself." Peace is made through the blood of the cross, but it is the Father who thereby makes it ; and, having made it, He proposes to Himself the business of reconciliation as an ulterior design. Verse 21 describes historically a partial fulfilment of this purpose in terms which leave its subjective character quite unmistakable : "And you *being in times past alienated and enemies in your minds*, in your evil works, yet *now hath He reconciled.*" The same truth is made perhaps even more conspicuous in the words which follow to declare the Father's final purpose concerning those who have been thus reconciled through the death of Christ, viz., "to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouable before Him ; *if so be that ye continue in the faith*, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which was preached in all creation under heaven." Here alienation yields to the reconciling influence of the cross, and, subject to the condition

of persistence in the faith and hope inspired by the gospel, reconciliation is to be consummated by perfection of character in the Father's presence.

*Katallagē* occurs in Rom. xi. 15 to describe the benefit which has come to the Gentile world through the casting away of Israel for a season. The language is peculiar, but assuredly the casting away of Israel is not referred to by Paul as a propitiatory sacrifice whereby the status of the Gentiles before God was affected. The fall of Israel was not required by God as a condition of Gentile salvation, nor were the Gentiles received with favour because of it. The casting away of Israel was contrary to God's desire and only happened because Israelites were so jealous of their privileges as a separated people that they stayed out of the kingdom rather than share Divine favour with foreigners. Thus their downfall was an incidental but deplorable part of the cost at which the world was reconciled. God permitted it rather than forego His universal plans of grace, but it formed no part of the moral basis of reconciliation for mankind. This is so far indeed from being the case that Paul joyfully anticipates that when Israel has been humbled to accept God's grace her restoration to favour will be far more beneficial to the world than is her temporary casting off.

#### REDEMPTION.

Before closing our review of the Biblical idea of propitiation it may be expedient to consider another

set of words which deal with the same subject under another aspect, viz., that of redemption. These terms<sup>1</sup> are commonly regarded as furnishing decisive evidence that Christ redeemed us by presenting His blood to God as the price of our release from condemnation, and consequently as a means of propitiating God. It will be necessary, therefore, to investigate the grounds of this opinion.

It is indisputable that classical usage would fully sanction this interpretation of the terms, but we have already found that the New Testament writers did not adopt pagan ideas when they employed the Greek language for the publication of Christian truth. We must therefore continue our inquiry in the light of Hebrew history and literature.

The word "redeem" in its various forms carries us back to the most ancient times. The Hebrew law enforced (though with supremely important restrictions) the primitive custom which imposed upon near kinsmen the duty of espousing the cause of their relatives, and, pre-eminently, the duty of avenging them if slain by violence.

The duties thus laid upon the Goel might sometimes be to his advantage and gratify his natural feelings, but frequently they involved self-sacrificing labour or an outlay of money, and sometimes they exposed him to a serious risk of life. The land-laws were based on the principle that the land was God's, but under Him it belonged to certain tribes, and within the tribe to certain families, so that the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 28.

individual possessed only a life-interest in his estate, and was not able to sell it in perpetuity. In order to raise money he might part with his own temporary rights, but could not lawfully alienate the estate from his family or tribe. It frequently happened, however, that land which had thus been pawned could not be recovered by the original borrower, because dead or hopelessly impoverished, and in either case the duty devolved on his nearest kinsman, who was technically known to the law as the *Goel*, *i.e.* "the claimant," the man who had a right to resume the family title. He could only equitably exercise this right, however, by paying the sum due to the temporary holder, and this fact imported into the term the idea of "buying back."

On the same principle the children of Israel were regarded in law as God's servants, and consequently were not allowed to become slaves to their fellow-men, though they might become bondservants for limited periods and under rigorous protective statutes. If an Israelite became poor his *Goel* was required to entertain him. If he sold himself to a foreigner, the *Goel* was required to redeem him (Lev. xxv. 39-55). If an Israelite were killed by violence, the nearest kinsman was forbidden to receive any compensation for his blood, and was required to avenge it, or, in later times, to secure the just punishment of the manslayer. The law provided for a trial of the offender, and, if not a wilful murderer, gave him shelter in cities of

refuge, but if guilty of murder, it inexorably decreed his death.

These were the chief duties imposed by statute, but in spirit, and as commonly understood, they sanctioned a principle which has been recognised by almost all primitive peoples, and is the root whence all institutions of civil justice have upgrown, viz., that the next-of-kin must constitute himself the champion and helper of his brother in all distresses, and do everything possible to deliver him from evil.

It requires no elaborate argument to prove that this law was not, as hasty critics have assumed, a mere legalisation of revenge. It would sometimes operate as a sanction of fierce passion, but its demands were such as human selfishness would find exceedingly irksome, and cowardice would be anxious to evade. In extreme cases it might mean that a poor man would have to encounter the forces of a wealthy and powerful family, and to run the risk of being slain himself, in order to avenge a murdered relative. It was thus God's call for generous sympathy, for family affection, for heroic devotion to another's welfare, even to the laying down of life, if needful, as a ransom for others.

Hence this legal adoption of a primal obligation of kinsmanship became the basis of many beautiful and noble thoughts of God. God was set before the Hebrews as their Goel, their next-of-kin, their Redeemer. When they were slaves in Egypt and in Babylon it was God who claimed them as His own

and redeemed them with His strong right hand. When through folly and sin they lost their country, it was God who redeemed their land from the stranger. Hebrew poetry is full of this great thought; and faith in God as the "Redeemer of Israel" was the inspiration of Messianic prophecy before Christ, as it is the hope of religious Jews throughout the world to-day.

The Old Testament will be searched in vain for any suggestion of a ransom or redemption price received by God, or of a price paid by Him to others. The most signal act of redemption, and the one which underlies the terms and spirit of Hebrew law and prophecy was the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Here we see that the work was God's spontaneous act. He offered Pharaoh no price for His own people Israel, but demanded their release, and when this claim was resisted He smote the Egyptians until they were ready to entreat their bondmen to depart.<sup>1</sup>

Other aspects under which redemption appears in the Old Testament are equally clear in their exclusion of the idea of payment for release. Thus we read "He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence" (Psal. lxxii. 14). "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from the grave" (Hosea xiii. 14). "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth" (Job xix. 25). "As

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Exod. vi. 6, xv. 13; Isa. xliii. 1; Psal. lxxvii. 15, cvii. 2; Isa. lxiii., &c.

the Lord liveth who hath redeemed my soul out of adversity" (I. Kings i. 29). "Rise up for our help and redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake" (Psal. xliv. 26). "Redeem Israel O God out of all his troubles" (Psal. xxv. 22). In none of these passages can the idea of mercantile exchange be discovered. Money or its equivalent was sometimes the price at which property or liberty was recovered, as between man and man; but whenever the work of redemption is God's it is effected by some act of power or grace.

It would be very strange if we were to find any less benignant and gracious view of God in the New Testament than is thus presented in the Old, but we may safely allow the teaching of the older writings to assist the interpretation of the new.

The most fundamental fact to be registered is that the New Testament writers freely speak of man's redemption as procured or effected *at a great cost*. No interpretation of their teachings which ignores or makes light of this truth can be worthy of acceptance or even of serious refutation. Furthermore, the death of Christ is set before us as in a pre-eminent sense the ransom (*λύτρον*) which was laid down on our behalf. We are redeemed "by the precious blood of Christ," writes Peter. "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood," cry the white-robed multitude in John's vision of Heaven.

But while this is to be kept in the forefront of all our thinking and teaching, we cannot too strongly



reprobate the assumption which underlies so many ancient and modern theories of redemption, viz., that buying things or persons at a great cost necessarily implies a consideration offered by one party and accepted by another. Until this assumption is effectually eradicated from Christian thought, some theory, or some vague admission of a price paid by Christ and accepted by God will persist to the great detriment of faith.

The possibility of buying things without money and without any analogous transfer of a valuable consideration from one party to another has already been seen in the language of the Old Testament, and is quite as clearly taught in the New Testament. This possibility is exhibited in passages in which Christians are admonished to redeem things which neither God nor man can sell or even give, but must be acquired by the buyer's personal efforts, *e.g.*, "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise redeeming the time (or 'buying up' the opportunity) because the days are evil" (Eph. v. 16). "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without redeeming the time" (Col. iv. 5). In these admonitions a distinctly mercantile verb is used. The world is a market-place in which Christians are to do business by making the most of every opportunity for service. Opportunity is providentially given, but we can only make it our own by seizing each occasion for service as it comes. There is no vendor, but opportunities will be lost and seasons pass unused, unless we are prepared to

employ them profitably at the price of diligence, promptitude and self-denial.

The idea of costly purchase in the absence of any semblance of barter or exchange shines out in passages where the same verb is used to denote the work of Christ. Thus Paul writes, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. iii. 13). "We were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world . . . but God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive Sonship" (Gal. iv. 5). In neither of these sentences can a seller be discovered, or any transfer of a price, or an exchange of commodities be imagined. Christ works and suffers to effect a benignant purpose. He does not obtain our deliverance from doom or bondage by means which cost Him nothing. The Father freely devotes His Son to a great sacrificial ministry; but this sending of Christ is God's "unspeakable gift" and not a payment received.

The same verb occurs thrice in the Apocalypse. Of the "hundred and forty and four thousand," it is said, "they had been purchased out of the earth," and "were purchased from among men to be the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb" (Rev. xiv. 3, 4). Here, again, there is no sign of a vendor. These saved ones have not been bought from Satan, and certainly not from God. On the contrary they have been purchased for the joint possession of "God and the Lamb." Similarly, but if possible

more vividly, we are told that the four-and-twenty elders sing a new song of praise to the Lamb, in which they cry "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase *unto God* ( $\tau\omega\ \Theta\epsilon\omega$ ) with Thy blood, men of every tribe, and tongue and people and nation, and madest them to be unto God, a kingdom and priests" (Rev. v. 9). It would be difficult to frame an utterance which in letter and spirit should more forcibly contradict the idea that the blood of Christ was presented to God as the price of man's salvation. That Christ offered Himself to God is true; but He offered Himself as the self-sacrificing servant of God's redemptive purpose, and at the cost of His blood redeemed a people from iniquity. Had the opposite idea been in their minds the elders would have been compelled to say, "Thou hast redeemed men from God with Thy blood."

Elsewhere a kindred, though less markedly commercial term is used, but to the same effect. In Luke xxiv. 21 the disciples say that they had expected Christ to redeem Israel. But evidently they thought He would do this by some mighty act of emancipation, whereby the domination of Rome would have been broken like that of Egypt in the olden time, and certainly not by paying Cæsar for the liberation of the chosen people. In Titus ii. 14 the thought of a consideration offered to God is excluded by the words "who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us *from all iniquity*, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people for His own possession, zealous of good works." The entire

passage is notable for the way in which God and Christ are unified as the active Redeemer. There is no hint of a transaction between them, as two parties to a sale, but it is "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" who gave Himself for us, and undertook the costly business of purging us from all iniquity.

The great passage in I. Pet. i. 18, is an exact counterpart of that in Titus. "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, *from your vain manner of life*, handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood." Here, as elsewhere, the terms savour of the market-place, but the great object is to exclude every thought of barter analogous to that for which silver and gold can stand as emblems. The language is laden with an ethical meaning. Redemption from "iniquity," and from an empty, fruitless manner of life, has no consonance with the idea of a price handed over from one to another. Peter teaches us that Christ died to redeem us not from God, or from "Justice," but from iniquity and godlessness, from the sin and folly which enslaved our souls. He shed His blood to purify our hearts and consciences, to make us "believers in God," to transform us from rebels into holy and obedient children; and Peter weaves these ideas into an exquisitely beautiful and cogent appeal to live as becomes those for whom so great a sacrifice has been made. There is no vestige of any stall or table of exchange in the Temple of God. Man's deliverance from the bonds of sin is the

spiritual analogue of the redemption of Israel from Egypt, but with this amazing difference: in claiming and taking back His ancient people, the cost in agony and death was laid on their oppressors; God heard the cry of His people, and brought them forth out of Egypt "with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders" (Deut. xxvi. 8); but in effecting our spiritual salvation the agony and bloodshed were endured by the Redeemer Himself, because only so could He slay our sins. In view of this great grace, what better can we say than Micah said, when, in imagery borrowed from the tragedy of the Red Sea, he foreshadowed a spiritual exodus. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have compassion upon us; He will tread down our iniquities under foot: and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah vii. 18-20).<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing discussion, though not minutely exhaustive, sufficiently proves that the Biblical idea of Propitiation is not that of a consideration offered to God. We have found nothing to clash with the thought that Christ is God's self-expression to man, and as truly His agent in redemption as He was in the work of Creation. We have found abundant

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 29.

evidence that the task of saving the world is one which God spontaneously undertook, but one which even the Almighty found difficult and costly, because it could not be effected by mere power or wisdom or absolute authority, but only by some means which secured the righteous conditions of forgiveness. A mere message proclaiming a Divine amnesty to the world would have been utterly inadequate for the achievement of God's redemptive purpose, but Christ fulfils this purpose by demonstrating the righteousness of the mercy which God had exercised in previous ages and now offers to the world through Him. In and through Jesus Christ the righteous God reveals His love to sinners without relaxing their sense of moral obligation, and reconciles them to Himself not only as a kind parent, but as the blessed and only Potentate. Through Christ, the Father enthrones Himself in the hearts of all believers, wins homage for His character and Godhead, constrains a glad obedience to His will, and thus causes the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled.

We have not examined all the elements of spiritual power which are resident in Christ, but we have seen enough to warrant us in saying that all the teachings of Scripture are in strict accordance with the principle that the nature of God impels Him to use all possible means, however costly to Himself, to convince men of His unalterable love, and to draw them by loving kindness to Himself.

## LECTURE VI

### SALVATION BY LOVE THROUGH FAITH

WE have now to resume our inquiry respecting the measures which God can employ for the extermination of sin and the salvation of sinners. We have seen that these two objects, though separable in thought, are unified in fact, because the only satisfactory extermination of sin is that which destroys it in man's heart and reconciles him to a voluntary obedience to God's will. We have seen also that love is the only conceivable fulfilment of the Divine law, and since God alone can inspire this, we have concluded that for the satisfaction of His nature and the accomplishment of His designs, He will commend and impart His love to men at any cost to Himself. The question thus set before us is very simple, yet vast beyond "the measure of man's mind":—By what means could God reproduce His love in our hearts?

If the recitation of a few New Testament oracles would suffice, our task might be accomplished in a moment. What could be stronger or more divinely

beautiful and luminous than these three gems in which the depths of light seem infinite?

“God *thus* (οὕτως) loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 16).

“And *this is life eternal*, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent” (John xvii. 3).

“But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. v. 8).

To attempt, by exposition, to make these words clearer seems like holding up a taper to display the sun, yet they have been in the world for nearly two thousand years, and only a small minority of mankind have seen their beauty and rejoiced in their light. It is true that during the last century the assurance of God's love has gladdened an ever-growing multitude, and has inspired a spiritual crusade, not to recover the grave of Christ, but to call dead nations into life, to make all lands holy, and to chase away the ancient gloom of heathendom. But still, in this twentieth century, the veil of traditional opinion shuts out the light of the knowledge of God's glory not only from the masses outside, but from millions inside the pale of nominally Christian lands.

This fact inevitably starts some painful trains of thought, and forbids us to let our discussion of God's measures become a mere academic exercise,



in which the stern realities of the world are ignored. It is easy to talk in abstract terms about the necessities of God's nature, and to weave a speculative scheme of measures for the impartation of His love to the world; but while we prepare to answer our theological problem, grim questions of a sinister significance are thrust before our eyes by the past history and present condition of the human race. We ask ourselves, and Agnostics ask of us, Is it credible that a living God is really behind the gospel, and that He has actually been using all the resources of His wisdom and power through Christ, and through the Church, to reveal His love for every creature? How can we credit the report of such activities, while we know that the Gospel has never reached the ears of an immense majority of mankind, and that to-day the love of God for sinners is roundly denied or implicitly disallowed by multitudes of professed Christians? But this is not the full extent of our difficulty. When the serpent of suspicion has insinuated one question, another grows out of it, or rather we find that it is only a part of one much vaster and more searching than itself. If it be true that God has an infinite supply of love in the eternal fountain of His being, and that from its very nature this love is ever yearning to outpour itself upon His creatures, and, further, if it be true that Christ came into the world to reveal, work out, and commend this love in deeds, why was God so tardy in sending this blessing to mankind? We look back on mil-

lenniums of melancholy history, and inquire, To what purpose was this long delay? Going back to the dim twilight age in which man's moral experience began, we are also constrained to inquire: If it be true that God's love is so rich and free, so plenteous and so potent for salvation, why was it not imparted to our race in the days of innocent infancy? If it can save, why was it not caused to work as a preventive grace? If it can uplift the fallen, why did it not keep us from falling, and preserve us faultless in perpetual joy before the presence of the Lord? How can we regard with hope the future remedy of sin, in view of that appalling past which smites our spirits with dismay?

The facts which underlie these questions are huge and terrible, and no closing of eyes will alter them. The love of God did not prevent a beginning of sin in the world. It did not prevent its spread and persistence until human crime culminated in the crucifixion of Christ, nor does it now secure the rapid reconciliation of the world. Have we any thoughts fitted to throw light upon these facts? Is it possible that even in the facts themselves there is some light to assist the inquiry in which we are engaged?

Many Christian thinkers have found that a frank and fearless contemplation of difficulty is a passport into the kingdom of light, and it will be found so in the present instance. The questions we have raised are not insurmountable impediments, barring our advance along the road marked out, but clues

for the guidance of our quest, and implicit confirmations of the truths already reached.

These questions become our guides by presenting two alternatives for choice and excluding every other. On the one hand they set before us the sceptical hypothesis that the conception of a loving Father in Heaven is an intellectual mirage mocking our souls in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. On the other hand, they offer to our hearts the reasonable hypothesis that God is Love, but that there is an inherent difficulty in the task of revealing and communicating His love—a difficulty which rendered an earlier demonstration of it in Christ impossible and one which accounts for the slowness of the world to appreciate the gospel.

I cannot conceive any third hypothesis. If it be true that God's nature impels Him to impart His love to men at any cost to Himself, this impulse admits of no delay, and it must have been just as strong in the days of the Patriarchs, and in the day of Moses, as in the hour of the Saviour's advent. The grace which appeared to all men in Christ could be no new thing, and is credible only as an eternal reality made manifest in time. The actual time of revelation must also have been the earliest possible time, for only so could it be the "due season" as measured by God's infinite solicitude and by man's dire need. To affirm avoidable delay is to deny the love which Christ proclaimed, and the appearance of delay would be fatal to our faith in the gospel unless we had reason to believe that ages of

preparatory education were indispensably necessary for mankind.

We are fully prepared to accept this hypothesis as reasonable, by our discussion of the idea of Love. We have seen, and must now emphasise the fact, that the true nature of love is an integral part of the Christian revelation, and is still imperfectly apprehended by large portions of the Christian Church. We have also seen how many false conceptions of it are current, and are fostered by a traditional misuse of words. These inveterate mistakes, which persist in defiance of the teachings of Christ and the power of His death, demonstrate that there are inherent difficulties in the revelation of what love is, and much more in the commendation of God's love in all its inexorableness to ignorant, prejudiced, and sinful men. As the outcome of these considerations, we are prepared to entertain the proposition that God's self-revelation was not willingly postponed, but was necessarily a slow and gradual process, which culminated in the gift of His Son.

A strong sidelight is thrown on this thought by a truth which saints and cynics are equally ready to admit, viz., that, as a rule, men do not covet what are intrinsically the best things, but things which make for immediate ease and pleasure. For countless generations men have sought the *summum bonum* in illusory and unsatisfying objects, and still continue to do so in spite of warnings from those who, after eating delectable fruit, have found their

mouths filled with ashes. However we may explain this infatuation, the facts are huge and glaring, and they illustrate the difficulty of imparting the best gifts, and pre-eminently the highest of all blessings,—the love of God. The history of philanthropy is full of pathetic evidence that, apart from their reflex influence, the labours of love are often lost, and that the holier and more perfect the blessing offered, the fewer are the people who welcome and appropriate the boon. Common gifts such as money, food, clothing and amusement are distributed without excessive difficulty. Sometimes even these are spurned, and, frequently, when accepted, are taken without gratitude, and are not regarded as tokens of affection. Not seldom the munificent are viewed with feelings in which pride, envy, and wounded vanity are intermixed, and the very power to give when seen in others, is often resented by the needy as an evidence of injustice in the ordering of the world.

When benevolence and wealth are united in an effort to impart something more valuable than material gifts, the difficulties of giving increase in proportion to the amount of intelligence, virtue and self-discipline which may be involved in the act of receiving. It is harder to give knowledge than gold, or things that gold can buy, because the best of teachers can only succeed by inducing industry, and even then they can only impart what the scholar has mental ability to appropriate by hard work. Again, it is harder to give wisdom than to give knowledge,

and the process must inevitably be slow. Even the child Jesus advanced in wisdom by a growth which was continued through many years, and growth cannot be hastened nor can it be extended beyond the measure of natural capacity. It may be aided by skilled nurture, and guarded against adverse influence, but growth in wisdom can no more be forced than bodily stature can be suddenly increased. But harder than the gift of wisdom is the gift of any moral and spiritual blessing. Trying to give, not mere bounty, but pure blessing, as devised by a loving concern for the virtue and happiness of others, the most liberal and self-sacrificing benefactors often find their overtures repulsed, because human nature craves to be helped and comforted in ways which enlightened love must decline. Folly has no relish for instruction or culture or moral discipline, and will reject the finest spiritual bread which heaven sends down, as if it were a stone or a scorpion. Christ found men eager to be healed in body. The lame, the blind and the leprous needed no persuasion to accept relief, and thousands followed for the sake of loaves and fishes, who had no appetite for the words of eternal life. They were eager to make Jesus a king, that He might deliver them from the Roman yoke and restore their national glories, but as His plans of love developed, and they found Him intent on delivering them, not from Cæsar, but from the bonds of their own iniquities, they turned in rage to rend Him as a troubler of Israel, and requited all His goodness with a cross. It is true,

therefore, that love is the only power by which love can be engendered, but it is also true that the higher, holier, purer and wiser it becomes, the more difficult it is to give, because it surpasses understanding, and fails to satisfy the selfish and depraved desires of those to whom it is presented.

Here, then, is at least a rational explanation of the phenomena which provoked our questions. God's love may be existent and active, but man is not saved by it until he has discerned, appreciated and received it, and has had it reproduced in himself, or in Pauline phrase, when the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.

These are not doubtful imaginations. They are confirmed by history, observation and experience, and they warrant us in making three definite affirmations, viz.: 1. That although love from its essential nature glows with fervent will to impart itself in blessing, yet it is not an easy or simple thing to give. 2. That the more perfect the love the more difficult its impartation becomes, because conditioned by the capacity of its objects to discern and appreciate its nature. 3. That its reproductive power is necessarily conditioned, not only by its own purity and intensity, but by its actual appropriation by those to whom it is proffered. The inference to be drawn from these propositions, therefore, is that, in order to become reproductive, the love of God must be displayed before men in a comprehensible form, it must not only become visible,

but must secure attention to itself, belief in itself, and a lively appreciation of its own preciousness. While unknown, unfelt, ignored, forgotten, denied, or even doubted, it has no regenerative power.

We are now in a position to take a most important forward step, or rather to see that such a step has been taken. Our conclusion that the salvation of sinners can be effected only by God's reproduction of His own love in human hearts, coupled with the further fact, that it can reproduce itself only when known, believed in and appreciated by men, is equivalent to a doctrine of salvation through faith. John teaches the same truth by declaring that we love God because He first loved us. Peter puts it quite as clearly by declaring that through Christ we become "believers in God." Paul sums it up in a sentence, in which the word grace stands inclusively for love and all its outworking in Christ: "We are saved by grace, through faith, unto good works." Hence the problem of begetting love resolves itself into the problem of inducing faith, and on this we must now concentrate attention. Hereafter we shall need to consider more fully the place and value of faith in relation to justification, but for the present we must confine our attention to it as an indispensable factor in the problem of bringing men into a voluntary obedience to the will of God. Whatever there may be in faith which renders it inherently well-pleasing to God, its primary value lies in the fact that it is the only conceivable door



by which the King of Glory can enter into human hearts.

For reasons which will presently appear, I would here call attention to the striking manner in which these principles are confirmed and illustrated in the Biblical account of the manner in which sin entered into the world. The story of Eden is dismissed by many critics as irreconcilable with scientific theories of man's ascent from lower forms of life. It is also variously interpreted by those who highly esteem its religious value; but into such questions I have no need to diverge. As pointed out in another connection, the religious significance of the story does not depend upon any particular view of man's origin, because it represents a process which must have been experienced by the human race to bring it into the position it occupies to-day. Whether man reached the height from which a moral fall was possible by a momentary act of creation which endowed him with adequate faculties and knowledge, or whether he reached it as the issue of immeasurable ages of evolution, the time arrived when he became capable of religious thought and feelings, and conceived the idea of One above to whom he owed allegiance. We make no illegitimate or disputable assumption in this statement, for the phenomena of moral and religious thought are facts to-day, and there was a time when they were non-existent on this earth. No theory of man's origin can get rid of the fact that his present religious faculty—the power to conceive

God, and to be conscious of moral obligation—must have had a commencement, and for religious purposes no more precise knowledge of primeval manhood is required. When an Alpine climber slips down into a deep crevasse, it is none the less a fall because it has taken him many hours to reach the altitude from which it became possible. Being on the ledge of ice above a yawning chasm, the man's fall is equally possible and equally real, whether the situation has been slowly reached by countless footsteps from the valley below, or by one step from a balloon descending from the clouds. So, as surely as religion had a beginning, it is certain that conscious disobedience must have had a beginning also, and whatever its antecedents, it was of necessity a fall. The thing we call "sin" exists to-day and has existed for incalculable ages, but it could only come into existence after the development of some elementary kind of religious life.

9) In the light of these thoughts we may dispense with any critical dispute about the Biblical story of Paradise. Whether read as literal history, or as we read the parable of the prodigal son, it portrays the only conceivable process by which a human mind could inaugurate the experiment of disobedience to a wise and good God when some simple belief in such a being had been attained.

What, then, is the essential content of the story? It is the account of a transgression of an admitted Divine command, brought about by the pondering, and at last the admission of a false thought of God.

The man is portrayed as suffering no hardship, but placed in the midst of beauty and plenty, peace and comfort. He was conscious of only one prohibition, but he gave heed to a suspicious thought which gradually acquired strength in his mind. Finally, he distrusted God's motive in forbidding some desired object. He began to think that he could improve his lot and raise himself to independence. Finally, in this spirit of distrust and self-will he did the thing of which he had previously said, "I ought not to do it." In that same hour a gulf of separation opened between him and God. In Scriptural phrase, man died to God. He became, as Paul describes it, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance which darkened his life when the lie invaded and captured his mind. Whatever else the word death may mean it means this, and this is its central religious meaning. Of this, which is death indeed, physical death is sadly sacramental. The cardinal religious truth, therefore, which is embodied in the story of Eden, is that through unbelief man died to God, and became dead in his trespasses and sin. He lost the power to love God through doubting Him, and he doubted because deceived by a falsehood which assumed a plausible garb so that by a lie he was slain.

Here, then, we behold man's ruin attributed in the Scriptures to a process which is the exact opposite of that which we have affirmed to be necessary for his salvation. Hence, on rational and Scriptural grounds we verify our principles by reaching them

from two independent starting-points. We verify the road from point to point by traversing it first one way and then the other, and finding it the same. Salvation for men who have become separated from God through the belief of a lie which estranges, embitters, and induces disobedience, is utterly and eternally impossible, unless by some means the lie can be expelled from their minds, and its place be reoccupied by the glorious truth, that God is good, and His will holy, wise, and acceptable. Only by some effectual revelation of this truth, therefore, can suspicion, insubordination, and hostility be quenched, love be awakened, and obedience inspired. If men are to be born again into a life of spiritual sonship, they must, as Peter writes, be "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever . . . and this is the word of good tidings which was preached" by Him who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life." It was not enough that God eternally "is love." There was a necessity for Him to show that love, and to so show it as to convince the minds and recapture the hearts of those who have denied or doubted its existence. In perfect harmony with the genesis of sin and the necessities of salvation, we are told in words which expound the whole mystery of the gospel: "God so (in this manner) loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

## THE PROVOCATION OF FAITH

If faith were a substantive article which could be imparted by a direct act or gift, there would be no difficulty to discuss. God would then only need to bestow this gift by a sovereign volition, and forthwith men would become trustful, all misunderstandings, suspicions, and aversion would cease, and through restored fellowship with God mankind would be gradually conformed to His design. Had such a course of procedure been psychologically or ethically possible, it would have obviated any necessity for those slow processes of Divine revelation which have occasioned so much perplexity, and suggest so many painful misgivings.

I have no disinclination to speak of faith as the gift of God, for, whatever may be the true exegesis of Eph. ii. 8, there is no rational theory of the origin of faith which does not trace its actual authorship to God. This by no means implies the intolerable doctrine that God bestows faith in a miraculous or magical fashion, *i.e.*, without the use of appropriate means. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest, but much to refute, the hypothesis that faith either is or can be given, apart from the instrumentality of truth objectively presented to the mind. From its very nature as a form of mental activity, faith must be drawn out by some person who is seen to be trustworthy and cannot be put into the mind.

There is nothing forced or even unusual in speaking of faith when thus produced as the gift of God,

for we have similar expressions in common colloquial use. It is said of a great general that he gave confidence to an army by his reputation and inspiring presence. A strong, calm surgeon gives faith to a trembling patient, and enables him to quietly lie down and commit his life to the operator's hands. The captain of a ship in deadly peril gives faith to his crew and passengers, as he stands issuing orders with unfaltering clearness and decision. So Christ gave faith to His disciples in the storm which threatened to overwhelm their boat. So God must give faith to men if ever they are to put their trust in Him as a faithful Creator and the righteous Father of their spirits; and in order to do this, He must needs overcome all existing obstacles in the thoughts, feelings and habits of those He would convince, and must effectually contradict the sinister suggestions which abound in this disordered world.

The most obvious hindrances to faith are those noticed in the discussions of sin and its consequences, but these are not the only, nor are they the primary, difficulties in the problem. If it were true that God could easily manifest Himself to innocent beings, whose environment presented no confusing and contradictory phenomena, there would be no answer to the question, "Why did not God so reveal His nature to the human race in its infancy, and before the experiment of disobedience had been tried, thus averting alienation?" Unless it can be ascertained that prior to any outbreak of insurrec-

tion there was some initial difficulty in producing<sup>?</sup> faith in the love of God, I know not how to reconcile man's actual history with the existence of such a being as the Gospel proclaims.

To say that love contains in itself the power to cure man's moral disease, and yet to suggest that God, being Love, needlessly postponed His self-revelation for many thousands of years, during which the world was perishing through His inaction, is to propound an incredible doctrine. If it be a necessity of God's nature to adopt all possible measures, congruous with a righteous use of omnipotence, to exterminate sin and save sinners, this necessity must have been as real and as impulsive throughout the ages before Christ as it is in the present era. It must also be admitted that the same nature which abhors existing sin and desires its extinction must have desired its prevention, and must have actually prevented it, *if prevention were possible in a moral world, i.e., in a world containing beings endowed with the faculty of choice between possible alternatives.* Even man's "free will" would fail to relieve the Creator of responsibility for sin, if a fuller manifestation of His character would have sufficed, without coercive pressure, to deter His creatures from making an evil choice! We can only believe in the love of God on the hypothesis that He can say to the human race as a whole, what Isaiah uttered in His name to Israel, "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I

looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isa. v. 3, 4).

These admissions are of the most solemn significance, and they throw upon all who make them a heavy weight of responsibility; but the issue of their study will, I believe, enhance our conception of the Divine wisdom and goodness. It will also, I trust, render us a more valuable service by showing that the death of Christ was not an isolated incident which might equally well have happened at any previous time, but was the crown of the Creator's work for the production of a royal race to inhabit eternity with Himself. Should this be the outcome of our thoughts, it will add to the joyous confidence with which we can extol the love of God, because in "the fulness of time" He sent His Son into the world, and "in due season Christ died for the ungodly."

I have elsewhere discussed<sup>1</sup> the distinction between righteousness and innocence. Righteousness is the actual doing of God's will, or the moral state of a man who is habitually conformed to the Divine standard of duty. Innocence is a mere absence of unrighteousness. A similar distinction must now be drawn between positive faith and the mere absence of doubt.

To apprehend the significance of this distinction let us imagine a state similar to that suggested by the story of Eden, but omitting for the present the

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystery of God*, chap. v.



intrusion of a personal tempter or the imposition of a restrictive command. Our ideal state is therefore to be conceived as one from which all possible causes, occasions or suggestions of suspicion have been excluded, wherein no desire has been left ungratified, and no gratification of desire is attended with satiety, disappointment or pain. I do not say that there ever was, or ever could have been, such a state of things on earth, or that it would have been to man's advantage if God could have created it. It is proposed only as an imaginary paradise, whose inhabitants are exempt from all those influences which are so often bewailed as provocative of unbelief. Given the existence of such an Elysian state there would by hypothesis be no dividing of persons by doubt, but, with this absence of doubt, it is certain that there could be no binding of persons together by faith. It is also worthy of remark that in such a state there could be none of the higher activities of love, whether between man and man, or between God and man. Indeed, the inexperienced tenant of such a place would have no power to conceive what love is as we understand it now ; and in the absence of any occasion for the exercise of faith and for the nobler deeds of love, there would of necessity be no conception of the highest virtues, such as heroism, fidelity, self-denial, fortitude, patience and sacrifice ; and with the elimination of these glorious moral triumphs, God Himself would have found no language, whether of words or deeds, in which to commend His own love to men. God might have

been the same as now, but no eye of man could have seen, nor ear heard, neither could it have entered into the heart of man to conceive what He has now revealed to this sad and stricken world by a suffering Christ. If the cross had been reared in this Elysium, and a Son of Man had been nailed upon it by some alien hands, that wondrous sight, which is filling earth and heaven with songs of praise, would simply have filled the light-souled, guileless children of Paradise with a senseless amazement and horror, as a hideous sight devoid of meaning. Such inexperienced beings would have been unable to interpret the outward signs of agony, because themselves unacquainted with grief or shame or pain, and would have had no speech nor language to describe, much less to explain, what they beheld.

Let us now revert more nearly to the Biblical story. Let us suppose that by some means temptation has been introduced into man's placid abode. The mind of the creature has been directed towards some hitherto undesired object which appears to be good but is discovered to be a thing forbidden. Immediately, the difference between real faith in God and a mere absence of doubt must transpire. A tried being, who had strenuously attained to a strong, intelligent trust in God's wisdom and goodness, would be able, in spite of all appearances, to say "God is love," and with this shield of faith he might quench every fiery dart of sinister suggestion. But a mind which had never had reason to examine

deceptive appearances, or to resist an inclination, and had simply drifted through days of calm contentment, would forthwith begin to debate the reasonableness of any unwelcome prohibition; and thus the hitherto unquestioning soul would become conscious of uncertainty and would waver between possible alternatives. This uncertainty in an untried soul would contain at least the latent possibility of unbelief, and whatever the actual issue, faith, which is essentially a triumph over the temptation to distrust, would for the first time become possible. It thus appears that just as some trial, which involves the possibility of disobedience, is essential to the development of actual righteousness, so some trial, which involves the possibility of doubt, disbelief, and personal distrust, is an inexorable condition and pre-requisite of faith.

I have put the case in this form because it represents the most favourable of all conceivable conditions for the production of the most elemental kind of faith, and because it shows that the Biblical story indicates the irreducible minimum of peril incidental to the production of faith. Had that first trial of infantile trust and obedience been successfully endured, the same peril must have been encountered again and again as the condition of further progress. As in our intellectual training the achievement of one task must be followed by the imposition of another of increased difficulty—and without this mental growth is arrested—so in the course of moral and religious education there

must be an ever-advancing demand for effort, and every victory must lead the conqueror to a new battle. The more we reflect upon the laws of growth and the essential nature of moral victory, the more evident it will become that even if the course of man's history had been one unchecked advance—*i.e.*, if every successive trial had been triumphantly endured—the necessity for increasing the strain upon his powers of faith and love and fortitude would have involved the call for self-denial, the endurance of suffering, and the subjection of his life to perplexing experiences. It must have involved hours of darkness as well as days of light; and times of apparent neglect and injustice as well as times of joy in God's brightly manifested favour. The race, even if sinless, could only have been educated into invincible faith in God's unalterable love by a similar course of discipline to that by which the sinless Christ learned obedience, and was made "perfect through sufferings."

Granting the soundness of these thoughts, we are brought to a remarkable conclusion, *viz.*, that it is not only untrue that faith could be produced more easily in a paradisaical world than it is in our present world, which abounds in perplexing conditions, but that it would be absolutely impossible for faith, as distinguishable from a mere absence of doubt, to be originated and developed in such an environment.

We may now leave this hypothetical discussion of

the problem of inducing faith in the absence of temptation. It has not been a needless excursion into an imaginary world, because it answers many suspicions and reproves a common form of discontent. It sets before us the inherent difficulty of the work which God's nature impels Him to undertake. It proves also that the hindrances which now oppose His success may be transmuted into opportunities of loving action, and that the very consequences of sin itself, which constitute the extremity of man's misery and need, supply a field for the exercise of God's most glorious attributes, and render possible a revelation of those unsearchable riches of grace which must otherwise have remained eternally unknown.

These thoughts do not explicitly tell us how God can demonstrate His love to us in our present state, but they enable us to direct our attention to this problem without a crippling suspicion that we are groping about in a darkness which might have been prevented by a timelier intervention. They forbid us to suppose that any avoidable obstacles have been allowed to gather, or that our path as moral agents is beset with perils which might have been averted. They silence the taunt which many have uttered that, if God be really saving men through Christ, He is only retrieving the calamitous effects of His own unwisdom or misgovernment in the past. They assure us that God did not willingly make us subject to vanity: that the groanings of creation are not the outcry of a world which God has

forsaken, or is cruelly tormenting, but are the cry of a world in travail to bring forth spiritual sons. They declare that all those things which seem to be against us, and needlessly complicating and retarding the process of deliverance from evil, are the essential conditions, and in some degree the actual instruments of the Redeemer's work in bringing many sons to glory.

It would be superfluous to expand an apologetic argument to vindicate in detail the ways of God with men between the entrance of sin and the advent of Christ. The discussion of God's righteousness in permitting vast ages to pass over the race before introducing an effectual remedy for sin needs to be pursued only so far as is necessary to the elucidation of the principles of Atonement by exhibiting the cross of Christ, as the consummation of a process which was never intermitted until the fulness of time had come. As a commendation of God's love to a sinful world the death of Christ is incredible if presented as a tardy commencement of saving activity. Hence it was indispensable to recognise that the appearing of the grace of God in Christ was delayed only by man's inability to see and apprehend the significance of so great a revelation. We have now seen that man's moral capacity to appropriate this remedy could only be attained through a prolonged and painful experience, which included a ripening of sin into distinct and reflective consciousness, as Paul explained when exhibiting the

true relation of his gospel to the legal discipline of the Hebrews. In accordance with Paul's theology the death of Christ cannot be divided from the moral and religious education of the race in previous ages. No part of man's experience can be cut off as needless, nor was one day lost by the Divine Worker. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Christ, thus proclaiming a continuity of action which ever tended towards the one great object for which He Himself lived and died and rose again. Thus the word Atonement, while specially and pre-eminently applicable to the death of Christ, is a word which interprets the entire government of God, and sheds light upon His manifold methods of work to bind His creatures to Himself, as to a righteous and therefore loving Father.

Is it needful to urge that there is nothing in these thoughts to detract from the supreme glory of the cross? They do but apply the truth there demonstrated to the solution of those dark problems of history which admit of no other explanation, and in doing this they disclose the harmony of all God's ways; they prepare us to believe that the cross is the supreme outworking of that everlasting loving-kindness by which God is drawing mankind to Himself, and thus they naturally bring us to consider the significance of the death of Christ as a weapon wielded by Him, who is Love, to slay our enmity by inspiring faith in Himself.

## LECTURE VII

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

IN singling out the death of Christ for special attention we not only comply with the demands of an enduring controversy but are following the indisputable example of the New Testament writers; and, above all, we are in harmony with Christ's own witness to Himself. In some of His most solemn utterances our Lord referred to His impending death as the supreme hour for which He had come into the world, and in the commemorative feast instituted on the night of His betrayal He expressly provided for the remembrance of His broken body and shed blood. We have no portrait, nor even a description of His personal appearance in the days of health and manly glory, but in the torn bread and crimson wine we have realistic symbols of His sacrificial death. Those who fail to appreciate these facts betray a lack of literary discernment, for all the interest of the gospels and epistles centres in the cross; and they assuredly place themselves outside the great company of believers in all generations, for the witness of Christian



experience, as expressed in art and literature, and, above all, in the utterances of dying men, has always been to the effect that faith, hope, and love were born in the travail of Christ's soul and are best nourished by His sacrifice. The testimony of that Catholic Church, which comprehends all faithful followers of Christ, may be summed up in words, which, speaking of the cross, declare—

“Where our earliest hopes began,  
There our last aspirings end.”

But while heart and intellect unite in giving the central place in Christian thought to the death of Christ, we can in no wise draw a line around it as a self-contained event or one which is complete in itself. It has already been seen that it stands vitally related to the work of God in the world from the infancy of mankind, and this necessarily includes all that He did in and through His Son as recorded in the gospels. But this wide statement needs to be emphasised and made more definite. The death of Christ is inexplicable apart from the life which preceded and followed it. The blood of the cross speaks in a language which men of all nations and tongues can understand when set forth as a part of the “old, old story,” but it would be dumb, or would speak evil tidings, if we knew nothing of the sufferer's previous career; and it would speak worse things than that of Abel, if, knowing the career it seemed to terminate, we knew nothing of the after life to which Jesus arose from the grave. No human life has been fully

lived until death has been accomplished, and, unless immortality be only a dream, no death has been completed until life has been resumed. Crucifixion was a daily incident in the Roman Empire, and two men were crucified in close company with Jesus; but no cross has any message for mankind, or any Divine significance, except the one on which the sinless Son of Man, who had proved Himself the Friend of Sinners and the Lord of life and death, consented to expire. Nor is this all, for the story of Christ's death would be more condemnatory to human nature, more daunting to the courage of well-meaning men, more pessimistic and misanthropical in its tendency, and more destructive of all faith in the righteousness of God than any other incident recorded in the annals of the world had it lacked a sequel in the tidings that He who died for our sins rose again for our justification, is alive for evermore, and is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of God.

Guided by these considerations we must now endeavour to interpret the significance of Christ's life and death, and more specifically we have to inquire whether the death of Christ was in itself an indispensable part of God's self-revelation, and therefore, in Dale's words, "necessary for human redemption," although not required to placate God's feelings or to satisfy His justice as an endurance of the penalty of human sin.

All believers in Christ as the Son of God will unite in affirming that the Incarnation was designed,

and actually served, to bring God into visible and intelligible intercourse with men. It is an article of Christian faith that Christ was not a mere messenger to tell men about God, but was more than an angel, more than an apostle sent from Heaven, more than a prophet proclaiming what He had heard and seen. We believe that the Word which was with God in the beginning, and was God's self-expression to the universe, became flesh and dwelt among men, so that in Him God was made manifest. The works that He did were the works of the Father who dwelt in Him.

From this doctrine it inevitably follows that the character of Christ was a true representation of God's character, and hence it becomes clear that His personality was a touchstone for the testing of man's disposition towards Divine goodness. This personality operated precisely as Simeon foresaw and predicted to Mary, while holding the infant Jesus in his arms in the temple—"Behold this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken against; yea, and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke ii. 34, 35). While still ignorant of Christ's unique nature and mission, men were unconsciously, but none the less really, brought into direct relations with the moral qualities which are most distinctive of the Divine character. This social contact, with the action and reaction of personal influence which it involved, was the indispensable prerequisite of

any effective revelation. Viewing it historically, we now perceive its true significance as an exhibition of the moral relations between the Sinless One and sinners.

Few things are more significant in the gospels than the extraordinary way in which men and women were caused to uncloak themselves on coming into touch with Christ, and became better or worse as the issue of such intercourse. Those who were most potently influenced for good developed a new type of goodness, and became the nucleus of a new society which is slowly but surely filling the world with a new manhood, of which the most distinctive feature is a desire to deliver all men everywhere from evil. On the other hand, those who resisted Christ's influence became visibly worse, and by degrees approached that climax of wickedness which He described as the sin against the Holy Spirit—a climax which can be reached only along the line of direct antagonism to goodness, when seen in its most perfect form.

Resting on this basal fact of social relationship as the condition of a mutual revelation of hearts, Divine and human, we may note the adaptation of Christ's chosen career to the furtherance of His great design as the Author of Faith, Hope and Love, and therefore the Destroyer of Sin and the Saviour of men.

1. By coming in a lowly social rank, and without exceptional stature, magnificence, wealth, official dignities, or supernatural attendants, Christ left men

the largest possible liberty to reveal their hearts, to develop their characters, and to work out their thoughts and passions in the most unrestrained and therefore truthful fashion. Had the Son of God come upon the scene with pomp and parade, waited upon by "liveried angels," and followed by legions of superhuman warriors; or had He come alone, but arrayed with supernatural majesty of person, men would have been overwhelmed with awe, stricken into servility by fear, or dazzled into an admiring wonder in which there might have been no element of moral sympathy. So coming, He would have appealed to the basest feelings of self-interest, and would have been sought after by the crafty and servile for the sake of His patronage and wealth. From such a resplendent being the humble and unambitious would have been repelled; while place-hunters, sycophants and toadies would have flocked from the ends of the earth to court His favour. But the Son of Man, who had not where to lay His head, had no attractions for the selfish, and could gather round Himself a band of leal friends, who, without corrupt inducements, and without a cancerous self-suspicion, soon learned to love Him for His own sake. At the same time He left the proud, the careless and the ill-disposed at liberty to display their true character, and to work out their own ill-will. Enmity and friendship, moral sympathy and immoral antipathy were thus allowed the fullest opportunity and the utmost freedom to expend themselves on Christ.

2. By the acceptance of a poor and lowly condition Christ was enabled to give an assurance of His sympathy with us in the harder experiences of life. Had He been exempted from these, we might, and indeed must, have felt that He was a stranger who had no part or lot with the poor and needy, or with those whose position is precariously balanced between sufficiency and penury. But by a voluntary acceptance and cheerful endurance of privations, He bore witness that God is not unjust or less than good in permitting us to suffer. If He to whom the earth with all its fulness belonged chose for our sakes to become poor, we can believe that our own subjection to similar distresses is compatible with the Heavenly Father's love. No manifestly rich and blissful being, no tenant of king's houses, no self-indulgent teacher, faring sumptuously every day, could have said, "Blessed are ye poor," and preached a doctrine of contentment. Those life-long trials which were specially concentrated in the wilderness temptations, harmonise our lot with the love of a God who, without difficulty, could transform our physical environment into an earthly paradise but has not done so. The Son of Man who once hungered and thirsted, yet refused to relieve His own distress a single hour before the Father gave His sanction, is a perpetual contradiction of a poisonous lie which is supported by strong circumstantial evidence, viz., that the Maker and Master of the world is too niggardly or too coldhearted to satisfy the wants of His creatures.

But beyond this reproof of man's not unnatural suspicions Christ placed Himself upon a coign of vantage for making an appeal to mankind for something immeasurably higher and more difficult than resignation, viz., the exercise of self-denial within the sphere of possible self-pleasing. Only one who freely took upon Himself a life of humiliation and sorrow could say, "If any man would come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it" (Luke ix. 23).

3. By His victorious endurance of all kinds of temptations which are common to man, He magnified the ideas of Law, Duty and Devotion. He also revealed the beauty of holiness, the wisdom of being accounted a fool for righteousness' sake, the happiness of renouncing comfort, security and social status for the sake of loyalty to God and for the furtherance of His kingdom. He supplied a new ideal of heroic virtue, and has embodied in his real life a higher law than ever was, or ever could be, written in commandments. In this way He humbles us to feel our inferiority and our unworthiness of fellowship with Him, yet He lights up the Valley of Humiliation with the sunshine of His sympathy, and commends Himself to the lowliest and weakest as a compassionate High-priest, a discerning Friend, and an effectual helper in the toils and struggles of aspiring life.

4. By enduring the assaults of human malice and

insolence without using force for their repression, or shielding His person by supernatural signs of majesty ; by enduring also the lesser slights and wrongs which proceed from cold indifference, from suspicion and distrust ; by hearing without impatience the exasperating misunderstandings and heartbreaking disloyalties of fickle, undiscerning, and sometimes treacherous friends, Christ attracted towards Himself all the currents of human passion, and developed into activity all the qualities which God must deal with as Father, Saviour, and Judge. By His own treatment of diversified types and shades of character, He exhibits for the perpetual instruction of mankind God's attitude towards each, and reveals the principles by which all sorts and conditions of men will be judged. By all His works and ways and sufferings as a living Son of Man Christ declares that Name which is God's glory. He thus makes known "the beauty of God" in His kindness towards all men, in His slowness to anger and readiness to forgive, in combination with a truceless hatred of iniquity, and a changeless purpose to by no means clear those guilty ones, who harden their hearts against reproof, and will not turn from their evil ways that they may live.

But, as already seen, the life of Christ cannot be told, nor its power measured, nor would it have been fully lived, apart from the supreme act of self-surrender to the Father's will and to man's hatred, which issued in obedience unto death. In the Cross all the



forces which were previously at work culminated, and all the truths and personal qualities revealed in previous incidents were focalised.

Whatever else the death of Christ may have been, and whatever purposes of God it subserved, it was most certainly a revelation, and the most intense, vivid, and sublime revelation of God in His relations with a sinful world. May we not even venture to suppose that it was the most resplendent revelation which even a Divine imagination could conceive? In saying this we do not necessarily demand an admission that the word revelation gives an all-inclusive and exhaustive account of the cross, but we do affirm that this represents an invaluable element of its power, and not a mere by-product or incidental effect.

That the death of Christ was directly and specifically designed to be a revelation may be confidently inferred from the fact that it was allowed to be a public spectacle, and has been depicted for the contemplation of mankind in histories of matchless simplicity and power. Had an endurance of death, apart from its effect upon the minds of beholders, been sufficient for the purpose of making an atonement for sin, the death of Christ might have taken place in the seclusion of some quiet chamber, and in the presence of friends, or on some lonely mountain top, where, like Moses, the Son of Man might have passed away without a human witness of His anguish. Indeed, such a sacrifice might have been accomplished in some other world, upon an altar

surrounded with amazed but adoring angels, instead of a deriding mob of human foes. It is incredible that the Father would lay upon His Son one needless pang, or subject Him to superfluous ignominy. Therefore, seeing that Christ was delivered into the hands of sinners, and by them was put to death as a malefactor ; that He was not only obedient unto death, but to the vilest of all deaths—that of the cross ; seeing also that His death was accompanied with extraordinary phenomena, these facts, when viewed together, must be accepted by believers in Christ as unanswerable evidence that it was God's design to render the crucifixion a spectacle to the world, and through what, with all reverence, may be called its dramatic power, to work upon the hearts and consciences of men. This view accords with all New Testament references to Christ's death, and with the actual effect produced by the recital of its tragic story on men of all ages and lands and every grade of culture. That it has proved to be a revelation of God and a powerful attraction Godward, is evidence that God ordained it for this combined purpose.

Looking back to that hour of darkness in which the greatest tragedy of time was consummated, we must humbly confess our inability to penetrate the secret of our Lord's consciousness : yet we are under the most sacred obligation to drink in all that mind and heart can read in the uplifted sign. No one who has watched the passing of a beloved companion will talk glibly of what death is, or pretend

to interpret the experience of dying; much less, therefore, can we hope to explain what death was to the Son of Man. As our brother He tasted death for every man, and therefore He would evade nothing which is painful in the common experience of mortality; but while this is a great and priceless truth, it is by no means the whole truth. We must not forget that our Lord, though truly man, was also something more, and this higher element in His nature necessarily involved something special in the process of dissolution. There is no presumption in saying that inasmuch as He was more than man, there must have been something deeper in His sufferings than our nature can experience. The fact that He was not only a son of man, but also in a unique sense the Son of God, must have made death more abhorrent, and endowed Him with a capacity for anguish which no human sympathy can measure.

Death appears to be terrible in proportion to the fulness of life and the wealth of the affections, and on this account there must have been in the sorrow of Christ some elements which no lesser mind can understand. But although we can never hope to know, much less to put in words the grief He felt, the things which are revealed belong unto us, and by diligent attention to all that has been recorded we may progressively apprehend the significance of that which is publicly presented to the gaze of the world.

It has often been urged by unsympathetic

detractors that Jesus exhibited less fortitude than has been displayed by many martyrs, although His physical sufferings were less protracted and less severe than some which have been triumphantly endured. The only possible ground for such an allegation lies in the fact that Jesus shrank from death with a dread which He took no pains to conceal. That there was such a dread is undeniable, but when it is observed that this dread was conjoined with a resolute determination to suffer, it points not to any lack of fortitude, but to some mysterious elements of mental anguish from which love shrank, though courage never quailed. We read that "knowing all things that were to come upon Him" He went up to Jerusalem. Knowing well that Judas would lead his band to Gethsemane, He went there instead of avoiding peril. He had power to escape at the last moment, and was able to summon angels to His succour, or to speak a sentence of death upon His captors, yet He forbade His servants to fight; and after offending valiant Peter by rebuking his zeal, and by healing the wound he had inflicted, calmly surrendered to His enemies. Though worthy to act as Judge He permitted Pilate to condemn Him; went to the cross and stayed there, refusing to deliver Himself, though able to come down at any moment. Not the nails, but His own will to do the Father's will affixed and held Him to the cross. During the hours of resolute self-sacrifice the signs of absolute self-possession were manifest. With mind unshaken by the cruelty and faithless-

ness of men, He calmly talked with John, and with the contrite thief, and prayed for the forgiveness of His slaughterers. Unless blinded by prejudice we cannot fail to see in these facts a proof that what Jesus feared in the garden of Gethsemane was not bodily pain, and that the physical agony of crucifixion was so minor a part of His distress that it was almost swallowed up in the great sea of sorrow which surged within His soul.

The tongues of men and angels are too weak to describe those sorrows of death which compassed Him, but we are not left without some clue to their nature. Men of many creeds have perceived that in that hour, He who had enjoyed the consciousness of the Father's indwelling, as none other ever knew, or can know it, tasted, as none other can taste, the anguish of being alone. The supreme joy of love is fellowship, and its supreme agony is separation. This Jesus endured. As the predestined hour drew near the circle of His friends contracted until no man was left. On His way to Gethsemane He foresaw the desertion of His disciples and said: "Behold the hour cometh, yea is come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." His yearning for their poor purblind sympathy appears in His request to a chosen three to tarry awhile and watch with Him in the garden, and in those pathetic words which chided them for falling asleep. He was encountering deadly forces of temptation, and was pressing forward to meet the

most awful of all conceivable assaults on filial faith and love, and He clung to those weak friends as if even their presence were a shield.

All these are signs to tell us that what Jesus dreaded as "the hour and power of darkness" was the loneliness which drew from His lips the great cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We cannot enter into this darkness to irradiate it with our explanations. But God has caused some light to shine out of it for our illumination, and every ray is charged with healing virtue.

Is there not a gleam of light in the fact that Jesus cried out the words of a familiar psalm, and that He did so "with a loud voice"? We cannot impute to Him a cry of weakness or a mere venting of agony which might have been suppressed. Such a cry reminds us that once before, at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus prayed aloud, and as He Himself explained, He did this for the sake of them that stood by, and that they might believe. Guided by these words, may we not conclude that when the dying Son cried aloud upon the cross, He did this also for the sake of them that stood by, did so because He desired to be heard by the multitude? Reverence for Christ compels us to believe that if the utterance had been intended only for His Father's ear, He would have spoken to His Father in secret.

Drawing out this inference a little further, may we not safely add that Jesus, who was dying to glorify God, and to beget faith in man by commending the Father's love, would utter no words on the

cross which could weaken faith in others by betraying any quiverings of distrust or complaint in His own mind? When once this thought has arisen, we may follow its leading, and say with boldness, that whatever Jesus said upon the cross must have been intended to positively promote faith and to enlighten His first hearers, and through them to instruct the millions of mankind destined to gather round that cross in future ages.

What, then, is the testimony of this strange cry? The first and most obvious reply to this question is that it could not fail to turn the thoughts of the people to what they all regarded as a Messianic psalm; not merely to the words actually repeated, but to the psalm as a whole. This is made the more certain by the fact that the words He adopted were those used by a reader in the synagogue when announcing the 22nd psalm. Assuredly it was not a mere coincidence, nor was it because lacking words of His own that He quoted the old Messianic poem. By uttering the first sentence of that psalm, He laid a constraint upon the people standing by, and upon all future generations, to read it afresh, to ponder it, and to learn the great lesson it provides. What, then, is the lesson of the psalm? What would it say to those who despised and rejected the man of sorrows, and esteemed "Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted"? Would it not bid them remember that, although God's servant might be hated and persecuted; though He might seem to be, and might even feel Himself to be abandoned to

His enemies, and forsaken even by the God He was serving, this would be no proof of Divine displeasure or neglect? Would not vaunting hatred be awed, and trembling faith be encouraged, by a recollection of the later words of that same psalm?

“Ye that fear the Lord praise Him ;  
 All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify Him ;  
 And stand in awe of Him, all ye the seed of Israel.  
 For He hath not despised, nor abhorred the affliction of the  
 afflicted ;  
 Neither hath He hid His face from him ;  
 But when He cried unto Him, He heard.”  
 (Psal. xxii. 23, 24.)

Such thoughts as these must have coursed through the minds of many in the crowd at Calvary, and it is incredible that Jesus did not mean to start them into activity by His cry.

† For ourselves, the clear teaching of the psalm in so far as it could be appropriated by Christ is that throughout the crucifixion Jesus was the object of His Father's love, and that throughout that hour of darkness He also knew Himself to be God's well-beloved Son, and not only the object, but the agent of His love for men. The psalm culminates in an exultant prediction of a great festal banquet to be spread by the recovered sufferer for the joy of all nations, and a world-wide turning to the Lord which should follow the deliverance of His afflicted servant. For the joy of bringing this to pass Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame, and willingly united with His Father in the great sacri-



fice of being parted for a season in some mysterious way.

But how can these things be? How could there be a severance while love remained unbroken, and while faith lived in the Son and faithfulness remained in the Father, with whom there is no variableness, neither a shadow cast by turning?

Some tell us that the feeling of being forsaken was but the faintness of creaturely weakness; some say that Jesus was mistaken; others say that Jesus endured a storm of Divine wrath as the penalty of our transgressions. But these theories are contradicted by the signs. The declared facts are very simple. The Son of Man was dying, and death is separation. Our clearest conception of ordinary death is that the human spirit leaves its organ of communion with earthly friends, and, passing out of the body, enters the unseen. Faith believes that, although the departing spirit is unclothed and leaves its vestment of flesh, it does not become a naked spirit, bereft of fellowship with the universe, but is clothed upon with a body of finer mould and purer substance. But the one thing we witness on this side of the grave is separation, the rending of social ties, the dividing of manhood into its elements, the going out of the spiritual ego into the unknown. But the death of Jesus Christ could not be so simple a separation as this. Our faith is that in Him the Father tabernacled in a manner quite unique. He was the only-begotten of the Father, and God was in Him doing works, speaking words, and uphold-

ing the human spirit in its superhuman tasks. According to this view of our Lord's person, the death of Christ seems to have necessarily involved a temporary severance of the Divine and human. We need no speculative theory, but, taking our Lord's words as absolutely true, they not obscurely suggest that there was a passing away of the Father from His abode in the Son of Man prior to the passing of the human spirit from the flesh which left an inanimate body on the cross.

Such a separation as this would well account for the mysterious dread which Jesus manifested. Herein lay the supreme test of faith and love and obedience. Herein lay the conquest of the old Serpent by the woman's seed. Around were all the forces of evil. Seen and unseen mockers derided Him. Friends were utter strangers to His strife. The Father though present to His faith was not within Him as before. Alone in the blackness and darkness with a heart surcharged with love, and resolute to accomplish its victory, what wonder that as the ocean of sin broke upon His pitying soul, as He felt its blows upon Himself, and knew what it meant for man and for God—what wonder that the heart of flesh failed to bear such pressure, was literally broken, and so let the spirit pass.

On such a theme hinted thoughts are better than attempts at elaborate completeness, and before leaving it I will only add that no theory of Death as a process of dissolution can either prove or disprove any theory of Atonement. The view I have

given is not fatal to the Penal theory, nor is it essential to my own. I have given it as a simple reading of the signs set before us, and as in my judgment the only view of Christ's death which accords with the glorious teaching of Psal. xxii. and at the same time interprets the cry as a true utterance of our Lord's experience.

What has been said may help us to unite the two sides of the great sacrifice at Calvary. It was God's sacrifice of His Son. It was, allowing for inevitable differences, an act prefigured by the offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah. The knife which slew the Lamb of God was wielded by wicked hands, but it pleased the Lord to bruise His Son and to put Him to grief for our sakes. It pleased the Father to do this, but therein it also pleased Him to grieve Himself. It pleased Him to give His Son up to fight the good fight of faith against the mustered forces of temptation to doubt and disobedience, because until these forces had been met and overcome it was impossible for man to be reunited to Himself. There was no severance of heart or moral accord. There was no anger, or abhorrence in God, no hiding of His face in displeasure, but the Father allowed the Son to be surrounded with darkness, and to live by faith only even unto death. On the other side the sacrifice was the Son's. He gave Himself up freely to be tried with an infinite test, to have His love and trust and obedience strained to the uttermost, that

so He might slay the lie which bred man's enmity, and vanquish the accuser of God in the most decisive way.<sup>1</sup>

“ O wisest love ! that flesh and blood,  
Which did in Adam fail,  
Should strive afresh against the foe,  
Should strive and should prevail.”

Leaving this general view of the death of Christ we have now to inquire into the specific reasons which warrant us in affirming its necessity as a means of human redemption. To some extent these reasons have been anticipated while considering our Lord's manner of life and its adaptation to the end He had in view. In spirit, if not formally, all that has been said in regard to the life applies with increased force to the laying of it down ; but the death was requisite for some purposes which no life untouched by mortality could effect.

1. The first and most obvious thought which arises is that if Christ had declined to share our lot as mortal, He would have escaped the one thing which men most dread, and would thus have limited the range of manifested sympathy, weakened His appeal to our hearts and limited the scope of His revelation. We are touched by His endurance of hunger, thirst and weariness, by His subjection to shameful humiliations, venomous slander, treachery, denial, mockery, and insolence ; but all these sufferings would have failed to inspire complete confidence in His perfect sympathy as the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 30.

Son of Man. Had Christ not died, dying men would have felt that they were passing through a valley over which He had soared with supernatural wings, and all our lifetime we should have lacked the consolation and courage which flow from Him, who, through death, hath delivered them; "who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." God has been pleased in His wisdom to leave His purest and most loving children to pass through the grave. Had Christ not died they would have been almost compelled to think that their own death was a mark of Divine displeasure, and incompatible with His assurances of love. But now we can esteem the suffering of death a part of the "all righteousness" Christ came to fulfil. At His cross multitudes have gathered faith to die, and as dying men to say, Father, "into Thy hand I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, Thou God of truth."

2. Had Christ not died He would have escaped the extreme force of temptation. Obedience untested by death has not been so tested as to prove absolute invulnerability. The progressive trial of Job passed from property to family, and from family to flesh, but the Satanic assault was rigorously limited by the prohibition, "Touch not his life." Had a similar restraint been placed upon the adversaries of Christ, it would have left room for men to question whether He would have carried His obedience to the length of dying. This question would certainly have been asked, cynically by enemies,

wistfully by friends, and suspiciously, or in specious self-defence, by those who were called upon to choose between iniquity and death.

It is true that to some men there come times when death is longed for as an escape from prolonged torments, and preference for death has not seldom been proved by the act of suicide. But this in no way contradicts the common feeling of mankind that death is the king of terrors. It is the fact that death waits behind all sufferings which lends them their keenest pangs. The Book of Job finely illustrates this truth. The sufferer's anguish was aggravated and his anger excited by a sense of disproportion between the weight of his affliction and the brevity of his days. Because he had to die before very long he preferred to die at once rather than drag out a miserable existence, only to reach at last the same gloomy gate of exit. Similarly we are allowed to see that as the appointed hour drew near our Lord awaited the final change of dissolution as a desired termination of His agony. This feeling found expression in the words, "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." Our Lord knew that He must be baptised into our death. It was inevitable, because the Father had willed it, and He had willed to do the Father's will. Hence, His soul longed for death, not as something easier than life, but because it was the consummation of His sacrifice and the prelude to His joy as our Saviour. It was because the baptism was so terrible that He desired to undergo it forthwith, and so let

it fall back into the past of things accomplished, instead of looming in the future as an ordeal still to be endured.

In order to appreciate our Lord's language we must include within the suffering of death, not merely the instant in which life ceases and sensation sinks to rest, but the whole course of anguish through which the Son of Man approached the cross as one about to die. Had He not known "all things that were to come upon Him," that last journey to Jerusalem would have been easier, and the agony of the dark betrayal night would have been mitigated. It was the shadow of impending death which gave a tragic pathos to the last supper. It is the thought of a living man already dying in anticipation, which has thrilled the hearts of millions in the words, "This is my body broken for you." "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." It was the approach of that predestined hour for which He had come into the world which wrung the blood-stained sweat from His brow. Indeed, the entire life of Jesus was one long journey up the "Street of Grief" to Golgotha—one long ascent of the altar stairs with death as the consummation to be reached.

From the days of Irenæus until now some voices have said that Jesus was not "in all points tempted like as we are,"<sup>1</sup> because He did not taste the specific trials which arise out of various forms of individual experience, and out of particular social relations, *e.g.*, those temptations which come to husbands, wives

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 31.

and parents, and pre-eminently those which are met with in advancing age. Christ did not live to experience those pathetic feelings of conscious decline in bodily and mental power, and that slow descent towards helplessness and decay which put so prolonged, so severe, and so subtle a strain on the human spirit. Practically this limitation of Christ's relationships, and the comparative brevity of His life, do not lessen our sense of kinship, or our confidence in His sympathy. But this is chiefly because He went through the all-inclusive experience of death. If Christ had evaded this part of our trial, the sense of His real kinsmanship would have been utterly lost, and men would have said, He knows but little of our temptations, for in failing to taste our death He has failed to taste the bitterness of human life. We should then have had from Him no example of the last stage of faithfulness, which is "unto death." He would have left us at least some apparent excuse for flinching at the last extremity from a trial which was not imposed upon the Son of God, presumably because too severe. In this way an undying Saviour would have failed to inspire martyrdom for the sake of Truth and Right, and for the sake of loyalty to God. Worse than this, because affecting vaster numbers, and depriving the world of its redemptive ministries, it would have failed to enlist that heroic army of men who have "hazarded their lives" for the gospel, and in myriads of cases have laid down their lives on the altar of man's service. His power to save ordinary men from



unbelief and murmuring would also have been curtailed, because He would have failed to teach the hard lesson of trust in the day of sickness, accident and peril. His miracles of healing manifest His kindness, and are sacramental signs of Divine compassion, but they have no adequate message for those to whom no healer comes, who hear no storm-commanding voice amid tempestuous winds and waves, and receive no bread in days of famine. The faith which can only trust for healing is an easily-broken reed, and in every case must ultimately fail in a world where death lurks behind each transient recovery of health. Those who cannot say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him" are full of latent unbelief and in ceaseless danger of rebellion; and men would have been better aided under this appalling temptation by a courageous mortal sufferer like Job, than by a deathless messenger from Heaven.

3. Had Christ not died He would have been unable to reveal Resurrection in such a manner as would assure His followers of fellowship in His risen life. An ascended Christ who passed to the Throne by some process of translation would have been no pledge of revival to a race still doomed to die. He would not have been our forerunner, passing through the veil as a leader and guide. It is impossible to overestimate the value of the Resurrection, or to define the manifold ways in which it operates to reconcile man to his lot, and therein to the Potentate who subjects us to vanity as mortal. Our thoughts of the Unseen are gladdened by the belief

that its Lord "was dead and is alive again," and holds in His hands the keys of death and of Hades. If all the words which thus set Christ before us were blotted out from the New Testament it would be like the quenching of many stars. I do not dwell upon those texts which speak of Christ as raised again for our justification, though from them a powerful argument might be framed, but restricting ourselves to those which involve no discussion, it is clear that faith, hope and love would have lacked most precious aliment had Christ ascended without first descending into the grave. Had Christ not died Peter could not have written those thrilling words which speak to us as begotten "to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Nor could Paul have silenced doubt by reasoning from the love which died to the love which lives to save those for whom the death was borne. Truly the Resurrection is a necessary and integral part of the gospel, and only because He died and rose again can we hear Jesus say, "I am the resurrection and the life." "Because I live ye shall live also," and only thus can we gather faith to say, when standing by an open sepulchre, "O grave where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting? . . . Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

4. Had Christ not died He would have evaded the last injury which human hatred could inflict, and by thus enfeebling the demonstration of man's enmity to holiness, He would have failed to present

in His own person an everlasting evidence and objective sign of the awful deadliness of sin. The cross of Christ is the climax of human wickedness. This does not mean that Christ's murderers were worse than all other men, but that on them came the terrible responsibility of meeting the Divine Personality more visibly than has been possible to others. In that central field of history good and evil came into collision, and each rendered the manifestation of the other possible in a culminating form. In the murder of Christ man committed Deicide, as far as such a crime can be committed, and the men who perpetrated this crime were true representatives of the race, *i.e.*, they were not inhuman monstrosities, but ordinary men living in an extraordinary age and acting in the sight and audience of the world for ever. We should account it a gross injustice if the actions of the Jews were personally imputed to us, but we cannot deny that those actions sprang from common human faults in which all are partakers; and thus the awful manner in which these faults may be developed is brought home to us, and we are humbled to confess the deadliness of the virus in our nature.

But while the cross convicts the race of crime in its worst form, it has also a unique power to convince men of sin in its more subtle workings and in its most secret germs and rudimentary shapes. No line is truer to Christian experience than that which says, "Gazing thus our sins we see." The law made sin exceeding sinful, but the cross teaches us to be ashamed of lives which no written law could condemn.

The splendour of its sacrifice reveals the utter worthlessness of an unloving life, the shamefulness of living to oneself. From that cross Christ calls men to take up their own cross daily, to deny themselves and follow Him, bearing His yoke and carrying His burden of acknowledged duty. Hence comes its power to convince of sin, not only malefactors but outwardly righteous persons, and to bring home to our consciences the significance of inward faults, and the antagonism to God which lurks in what Paul calls the "carnal mind." The cross may not compel us to charge ourselves with murder, or with any of the seven deadly sins, but it penetrates to the hidden source of sin, and teaches us to smite our breasts as morally akin to those who nailed Him on the tree, because like them we have been ungrateful for kindness, impatient of reproof, and weary of the call to repent and turn to God. Like the men we condemn we have not always liked to retain God in our thoughts. We have sometimes put Christ away from our minds as one who troubled us. We have flinched from the call to abandon pleasure for duty, and careers of ease or ambition for the path of service. We have been reluctant to forego, or even to endanger our position or prospects in the world for the sake of keeping close to Christ. Multitudes gaze casually on the cross without being searched thus thoroughly by its light, but none the less it is true that the death of Christ, as an injury inflicted by those who could not bear His reproofing light, has ever been, and must for ever remain the most potent means of convicting

men of sin against the Holiness of God. Job stubbornly and conscientiously defended himself against all the charges of friends, but knew himself to be a guilty creature when at last his eyes were opened to see God. So millions, gazing on the cross of Christ, have learned to say with the patriarch, "I have heard of Thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Had Christ not died this indispensable and supreme demonstration of the world's sin would have been lost to the Divine Government, and thus a primary condition of faith in the love of God would have been unsupplied; and, as an inevitable consequence of this defect, man's reconciliation to God's Person and Will would not have been accomplished. God cannot receive sinful creatures into peace with Himself until their guiltiness is acknowledged and His goodness is seen to be untarnished. Conviction of sin must precede confession, and confession must precede forgiveness. He who denies his own sin must deny the love of God; and thus God best reveals Himself in all the plenitude of grace when man is bowed down by the death of Christ to acknowledge the enormity of sin.<sup>1</sup>

5. Had Christ not died He would have given no adequate demonstration of the power of God to forgive man's sins to the uttermost.

This proposition is a necessary corollary from the last, but is so vital a truth that it demands independent treatment. We have previously seen that

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 32.

an assurance of forgiveness, although not in itself an adequate remedy for sin, must necessarily be included in any remedial scheme (*cf.* page 163), and have only to add here some evidence that the death of Christ was indispensable as a seal to all other tokens and promises of mercy, and constitutes an immutable pledge that the grace of God is sufficient for the pardon of man's worst iniquities when repented and confessed.

The Old Testament contains many signs and promises of mercy, and without Christ sinners learned to rejoice in the name of the Lord. The gospels also contain signs which surpass the force and beauty of all previous declarations; but however precious as aids to faith and illustrations of God's ways, these are weak and dim in comparison with the witness of the cross.

No one can overestimate the beauty and worth of such a narrative as that which records the pardon of a fallen woman who bathed Christ's feet with penitential tears. But the story of the Magdalene pales when compared with the prayer of Christ for His murderers—a prayer which found its fitting sequel in the forgiveness which was preached in the name of Jesus a few days later to those who had clamoured for His death. To appreciate the difference between the glory of the one and the excelling glory of the other, several points must be considered. We must remember that although the woman had sinned grievously she had not obviously or consciously sinned against Christ. There is nothing, therefore,

in the narrative to impress men with the wealth of Christ's personal forgiveness as the grace and magnanimity of one whose own heart and flesh had been pierced by her offence. The story of her fall from virtue is veiled, so that we know only the depth to which she had sunk, and cannot estimate her guilt. At the outset her fault may have been a too pliant surrender to the selfish passion of a man she loved. It may have been a sin of passion, but even then it had no injurious intention, and sexual lust, however repulsive to the pure, cannot be ranked in guiltiness with bloodthirsty hatred. Moreover, when this woman first appears upon the scene she is in an attitude which disarms our anger, for she is profoundly contrite. We are not told how her penitence was produced, but she was penitent. Her old life was already dead, and her tears coursed from a purified fountain of grief. The story has led many like her to cast themselves for cleansing at Christ's feet. But it has left thousands hard, bitter and reckless, because they have felt themselves to be so much guiltier than she, and consequently have failed to discern a saving sign in her salvation. But when Christ arose with the marks of the nails and the spear in His revived form, and through the apostles, held out a pierced hand in offered peace and pardon to the men who crucified Him, He showed the utmost measure of forgiveness which God Himself could devise. No sin could be too flagrant or too directly aimed at His person to be forgiven if the crucifixion could be forgiven. Such

a display of mercy left no room for any man to say or think, "I am worse than the murderers of Christ! There is no hope for me!" In this way the blood of Christ becomes the blood of the new covenant, which unlike the old one includes the remission of sins. Had Christ not died, this strong and everlasting, this indispensable sign of salvation to the chief of sinners, would have been lacking.

6. If Christ had not died He would not have perfectly revealed the impotence of sin against God; and without this an essential condition of any world-wide publication of a divine amnesty would have been lacking. The importance of this principle has seldom been urged, but can scarcely be exaggerated. It is of course as much the duty of a dwarf to forgive a giant, as it is the duty of the giant to forgive the dwarf; but the pureness, freeness and magnanimity of proffered mercy is in the one case evident, and in the other is at least open to suspicion. So the offer of an amnesty by a king who has conspicuously failed to put down a rebellion is more likely to inspire ridicule than gratitude, and instead of allaying enmity it will probably excite contempt. To have any good effect the one who offers to remit punishment must manifestly be in a position to inflict it if necessary. He must speak from an altitude of authority and power, and not from a tottering throne, or from the dust to which he has been smitten. It was always possible for God to demonstrate His power by terrible acts, and thus judgments always have been, and always



must be, a part of God's governmental methods. Alike with nations and individuals a rod of iron may be needed to prepare the insolent for messages of peace. But the great problem was to bring home to man the futility of insurrection by measures which carried also a reconciling virtue, and instead of crushing to the ground, drew the rebel's heart Godwards in contrition as well as submission. To bestow a truly beneficial forgiveness on His foes it was necessary for Christ to be exalted to the throne of universal dominion as a Prince. But to bring His foes to cast themselves before His feet, not as cringing creatures trembling for their lives, but as broken-hearted opponents, disarmed, not only of their weapons, but of all desire to use them if they could, it was needful that in the exalted Christ they should see one against whom they had done their worst—and had done it all in vain. This combined demonstration of human wickedness and impotence, together with God's long-suffering and power, is furnished in the cross. Man there raged against the representative of God, and seemed to have gained a complete victory; but in a few hours the stroke which was meant to destroy and banish the Holy One recoiled upon the strikers, while the Lamb of God, Who had silently submitted to be slaughtered, came again from the dead, not to smite with an avenging sword, but to overcome evil with good. ↓

In speaking of man's impotence against God I have viewed it in relation to His kingly authority, and to His moral power to forgive, but of these two

the latter is undoubtedly the more important, though the demonstration of neither could be spared. It was needful to have it demonstrated that, in an ancient phrase, man's puny warfare with God was only a suicidal rush upon the thick bosses of His buckler, or, as a Hebrew prophet depicts it, a war of briars with a flaming fire. But in order to inspire saving trust and love, in addition to wholesome respect, it was supremely needful to show that man's most virulent hatred failed not only as against God's strength, but as against God's goodness, inasmuch as it left Him unmoved in the calm peace of His eternal and invulnerable love. The worst effect of hatred among men is the excitation of retaliatory passion. The man who can rule his own spirit under fierce assaults of enmity is a greater conqueror than he who taketh a city. Moral greatness lies in absolute superiority to the provocations of evil. So the glory of Christ becomes most transcendent in the hour of shame and supposed defeat. The cross was the divine victory over evil, for there the divine sufferer was lifted up in sublime steadfastness of spirit, while the storm of Satanic wickedness beat against His feet, and broke upon Him in impotent fury, like ocean waves against the rocky headland of a continent. Thus God expressed Himself in Christ crucified as One who could not be changed in spirit, or be turned from His eternal kindness by those ages of human provocation which reached their climax in the murder of the well-beloved Son whom He sent to be the Saviour of the world.

7. If Christ had not died He would have failed to impress upon men's hearts an adequate sense of the truth that God is grieved by the existence of sin, and without this a vital element of spiritual power would have been absent from His revelation of God.

There was a general reluctance in the ancient church to attribute sorrow to the Father, and this feeling is still widely prevalent. This is partly due to a general dread of anthropomorphic language; partly to the thought that suffering is incompatible with the majesty and beatitude of God, and partly to hereditary prejudices traceable to the Patripassian controversy. We have no occasion to revive this old conflict, because the question whether God can suffer was only incidentally raised in dealing with those who were charged with metaphysical heresies in relation to the Trinity. A denial of Sabellianism leaves the possibility of divine suffering unaffected, and the most rigorous Athanasian is not only free, but bound to consider the teachings of Scripture with an open mind.

In regard to anthropomorphic language we must beware of urging objections against some samples of it, which, if valid, would be equally fatal to all, and therefore, destructive to religion. We are unable to avoid anthropomorphic language except by keeping silence about God, and the Bible teems with it from end to end. It is not a time mark peculiar to the early stages of Theism, but is as strongly marked in the latest books of the New Testament as in the earliest documents we possess. All our ideas of God

are finite and unworthy efforts to conceive His glory, and our words must needs be more defective than our thoughts. But if we scruple to speak of God being grieved we must go on to deny that He can be angry or pleased, that He can feel pity or solicitude or love. Indeed, as the logical issue of our fastidiousness we shall be committed to a denial of all relations, and then the only God left to us will be the infinite iceberg of metaphysics. In speaking of God we may not forget that all our terms are analogical, and that the self-consciousness of God must needs be unsearchable and unutterable; but unless prepared to dispense with revelation we must take the revelation which bids us trust in One who made us in His own likeness. Given the principle that man as a person most resembles God, it follows that He can best reveal His heart in the language which expresses human affections. This also accords with the cardinal doctrine of Christianity, viz., that in Christ, God assumed the human form as the ultimate expression of Himself to man. Thus the Incarnation is the crown of anthropomorphic language, for in Christ "the Word became flesh" that in seeing Him we might see the Father.

Every Christian Theist is committed to the belief that our deepest, truest, and most authoritative knowledge of God is that which we obtain through Christ. Pre-eminently it is in Him that what we freely speak of as "the heart of God" is revealed. Hence it is to Christ we must look for answer to the question, Can God be grieved? The answer is not indistinct,

and is given in these two truisms of the Christian faith: (1) That there was real suffering in Christ. (2) That He who is well spoken of as the Man of Sorrows was set forth as a manifestation of Him whom no man hath seen at any time or ever can see. How false then the spectacle of Christ crucified must be, if there is nothing in God which corresponds to this most characteristic feature of Him who is "the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance"! The question is not, May we, like the ancient Patripassians, identify the Father and the Son? But does the Son truly represent the Father? If we are forbidden to find in Christ's sorrow a sacramental sign of something in God which is thus expressed to human minds, then we must discard the idea that Christ reveals the Love of God, or His Righteousness, His Holiness, His hatred of sin. Indeed, once started on this road of critical negation we must renounce the gospel; and denying the very possibility of divine self-revelation, we must retreat into Agnosticism, and live as best we can without God.

Declining such desolating scepticism as the anti-thesis of Christian Faith, let us endeavour to learn what the Son has declared. No efforts would enable us to achieve a complete analysis of the great sorrow He reveals, but we shall not seek in vain to read the mind of Christ, because it has found expression in His words, His tears, His groanings, and His blood.

*a.* It is abundantly evident that the Saviour be-

moaned the havoc wrought by sin in human nature. We are told that He was grieved by the hardness of men's hearts. As He neared the grave of Lazarus "Jesus wept." Those tears were not shed to make the people think that He was grieved, while all the while there were no feelings within corresponding to those which bring tears to our own eyes. They must have been the true token of an inward experience, which our own griefs enable us to partially interpret, and yet we cannot imagine that while calmly intent on raising Lazarus, Jesus wept merely as one bereft of a friend. May we not surely say that Jesus wept not for Himself, but for those at His side who were distressed; and not for them only, but for the whole mass of misery on earth represented by the scene on which He looked? He knew that the anguish of Martha and Mary, though poignant, would be transient, but he saw therein a type of sorrow never absent from the world, a sorrow embittered at its source by sin.

There were no tears at Calvary, but that fountain of woe from which tears spring was opened up within the sufferer's heart. Christ was grieved that men could be so wicked, that human hearts which were made to be the springs of all goodwill, and sources of delight at which other hearts might drink, should become poisoned fountains, pouring out streams of bitterness. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," wrote down a Hebrew poet as a true account of the Divine mind. May we not extend the saying to cover all the generations

of mankind? Surely the grief made visible for a few hours in Christ was a revelation of the truth that everywhere and always, sin is a cause of grief to the Creator,—a grief so intense that nothing less than Calvary could set it forth. We rightly think of sin as causing misery to those who practise it, and to all whom it affects in person. But the Cross calls us to consider how lamentable it is in God's sight, and how He mourns to see confusion, strife and moral disease, where order, amity and health are His desire.

*b.* Akin to this great sorrow of the Creator over the marring of His works,—the King over the desolation of His kingdom—the Father over the degradation and disruption of His family—there are clear evidences of sorrow on account of our agony, our abject misery, and above all there is a manifestation of sympathy with men in the shame, and fear, and self-aborrence which burn like the flames of Gehenna when the consciousness of sin has been aroused.

One of the most striking features of the Christ is this strong fellow-feeling with the sufferers He beheld, the sick He healed, and the sinners He reproved and forgave, or sorrowfully forewarned of judgment. We often think of Him as healing multitudes with sublime ease, and contrast His royal method and invariable success with the slow and precarious use of means by ordinary physicians. Yet the evangelists make it plain that Jesus was not a cold, passionless healer, but One

Who spent His strength in working miracles. Outwardly these great signs were wrought with ease, yet inwardly they wrung His spirit and drew virtue from His vital store. "Surely He has borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows," wrote Isaiah; and, as already noticed, Matthew finds a fulfilment of this strange utterance, not in any contraction of disease, but in the compassionate miracles of healing, wherein His loving spirit took the burden of affliction upon itself. He "healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases'" (Matt. viii. 17). The sympathy of Christ is brought home to us by all the incidents of His ministry, but His blood attests it better than any words, or works, or sighs, or groans, or tears. By the power of His cross He has made sinners feel that He is their nearest, most discerning, and most consecrated friend. Souls lost in the most awful of all solitudes—the sense of guilt and doom—have learned that the crucified One is able to be with them in that wilderness, that though He knew no sin of His own, He knew the shame, the horror and the burning ache of guilt. No multiplication of miracles, no shedding of tears, no eloquence of words, could thus have touched us with a sense of Divine sympathy in the sorrows which have compassed us through sin; and in order to lay upon our stricken souls this healing touch, it pleased the Lord to bruise His well-beloved Son, and put Him to grief.



c. But within and below all these elements of sorrow, there may be discerned another which can scarcely be defined in words, yet has been dimly seen by myriads of simple souls while gazing on the cross. I can only hint at what I would express, by describing it as the sorrow of the Almighty because of the limitation set upon the benignant use of His power, as the Maker and lover of men. I am aware that to some minds such words may have no meaning, and that to others they may seem almost impious, and altogether absurd. It will be said: How can we dare to attribute a feeling of weakness, or insufficiency to God? Theologians who start with an assertion of God's absolute sovereignty, and particularly those who allow their glorification of His authority and might to eclipse His moral attributes, will denounce such language, and will ask: Can anything be too hard for God? Can He not do whatever He wills to do in His own universe? But such questions count for little in view of Scriptural statements and historical facts; and surely they should be silenced in the presence of Him Who fell under the burden of His cross, and became weak as we are in order to manifest the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible!

The thought I wish to exhibit may become clearer, if we compare the language of Scripture concerning God's work in Creation with that employed to describe His work in Redemption; or in other words, if we compare the old creation whereby the world, including man, was made, with the new creation

whereby men are spiritually made new creatures in Christ Jesus. The first creation is always represented as effected with ease. Not a sentence can be quoted which suggests an idea of Divine effort. "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." "He spake, and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made." These are fair examples of Scriptural language on this theme. With sublime ease the Almighty will issued in command, and without labour or weariness the cosmos was framed. But in dealing as King with created moral beings the Creator was limited by His own determinate counsel and election to endow them with a power of obedience, which necessarily involves a power of disobedience to His mandates. Here again in this moral realm God commanded, but His law was set at nought. Omnipotence could produce unnumbered stars and solar systems, but it could not produce a willing spirit by any coercive fiat. Out of stones or dust it could produce men, and by an effectual decree it could endow them with the faculties we now possess. But having given such faculties, even Divine power could only work towards its ultimate ends and objects by calling them into active exercise, and by subjecting them to appropriate discipline. Hence all through the Old Testament we find anthropomorphic language which attributes to God a sense of failure and disappointment. We are strangely told that when He beheld rampant wickedness on earth, "it repented the Lord that He had made

man." Of the cowardly and rebellious children of the Exodus it is written :

"How oft did they rebel against Him in the wilderness,  
And grieve Him in the desert?  
And they turned again and tempted God,  
And limited the Holy One of Israel." (Psm. lxxviii. 40. 41.)

The same thought of one whose kind intentions are restrained by sinful unbelief is uttered with even deeper pathos in another Psalm.

"Oh that my people would hearken unto me,  
That Israel would walk in my ways!  
I should soon subdue their enemies,  
And turn mine hand against their adversaries.  
The haters of the Lord should submit themselves unto  
Him;  
But their time should endure for ever.  
He should feed them also with the finest of the wheat:  
And with honey out of the rock should I satisfy thee."  
(Psm. lxxxix. 13—16.)

Similarly in his Song of the Vineyard Isaiah challenged Israel to confess that He had done all He possibly could do to secure a vintage of righteousness. Hosea also laments in God's name, "Though I have taught and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. They return, but not to Him that is on high: they are like a deceitful bow" (Hosea vii., 15, 16): *i.e.*, God's people were like a faulty weapon which frustrates the skill of the finest archer, so that he cannot reach the mark at which he aims. These are not exceptional voices, but samples of an ever-recurring note of upbraiding and grief attributed to Him whose goodness is thwarted by man's sin.

Throughout many centuries the Spirit of prophecy foretold that God would do something to conquer rebellion, and to save men from their follies and sins ; but no prophet ventured to speak of this pre-determined work as an easy or simple task, or as a thing which God could do at any moment. In the most wonderful poem of salvation that was ever written, the prophet foretold that the work could only be done by a suffering "Arm of the Lord." He would be able to reach His goal, but only through humiliation and anguish. He would not fail to beget a spiritual seed, but it would be through an agonising travail of soul. Prophetic imagery thus likened the Messiah's work in begetting spiritual sons to the throes of natural maternity, instead of to the calm and effortless production of the cosmos by God's word. Not by might, nor by power, but by the sacrificial life and death of the Man of Sorrows was man's redemption to be wrought.

In the New Testament we read the fulfilment of these oracles. Throughout His career we see Jesus working under self-imposed conditions, which demanded the use of slow moral methods, and precluded any prospect of instantaneous success.

The temptation to convert stones into bread appealed to the natural craving of a hungry Son of Man for food, and the temptation was strong, because the power to make bread was there, and in itself nothing could be more innocent. But when temptation became an incitement to take a short road

to royal power, it was stronger still, because it appealed to the hunger of a loving heart to reign over men for their good and to put an end for ever to injustice and oppression. Those who have yearned to deliver their fellows from evil and have found them madly wedded to their bane, can faintly apprehend the agony of Christ in conquering this temptation, as with painful self-restraint He chose that tedious road which lay through years of misjudgment and contempt to Calvary; the road which He still is treading, in the Church which is His body, through centuries of long-suffering and delay. Not by might nor by power, but by a meek and lowly spirit was He to win His throne in human hearts.

Even the miracles of Christ were not wrought to dazzle or subdue, but were, with a few instructive exceptions, granted as His reply to believing requests. His delight was in showing mercy, yet He marvelled at men's unbelief by which he was so restricted in His work. It has been placed on record concerning His sojourn in His own country "and He could there do no mighty work" (Mark vi. 5). He had come in obedience to His Father's command, "Let there be light." Yet He had to lament that many were not enlightened because they preferred darkness. He had come in the power of God's spirit to seek and to save the lost, to preach good tidings to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that were bruised; yet

He could confer no spiritual boon apart from a humble, contrite, and receptive spirit, which bowed men as learners at His feet. He was rich in mercy, full of compassion, and hungry and thirsty to satisfy men's needs; yet after bewailing the indifference and scorn of the cities of Galilee, He was constrained to stretch forth His hands towards the crowd, and make known the tender yet inexorable conditions of relief, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Still more expressive of the grief felt by one mighty to save, yet limited by man's perversity, are the words Christ uttered, and the tears He shed when drawing nigh to the city of Jerusalem a few days before His death. "If thou hadst known in this thy day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," and again a few days later, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

It may help us to form a more definite conception of God's sorrow (and incidentally it will show the importance of its revelation), if we observe how perfectly it meets and answers some of

the most widespread and persistent hindrances to Theistic faith, viz., those which arise from the presence of evil in a world which is declared to be under the dominion of a God Who is infinite in both Power and Goodness. In some form or other the ancient dilemma is perpetually recurring,—God does not prevent or remove evil ; therefore we must believe, either that He cannot, or that He will not put it away. If He cannot do this, He must be deficient in power ; if He will not, He must be less than perfectly good. This is not a mere catchword of theoretic atheism. It is the problem of problems by which seekers after truth have been dismayed. Even now, with all the light of Christ to shine away our fears, this difficulty recurs with every fresh display of apparently triumphant and unconquerable evil. It is the not infrequent burden of saintly souls who are jealous for God's honour. In a vague, but keenly painful form it haunts the minds of many children. They have been taught to believe that nothing is too hard for God, and that no care is too slight to wake His sympathy ; yet they have to bear heart-rending sorrows, and call aloud for pity, without apparent answer from the heavens.

This difficulty has perhaps never been expressed more lucidly, or with a more sincere desire to find a credible solution, than by J. S. Mill in the third of his "Essays of Religion." He found what he deemed to be the only conceivable answer in the hypothesis of a God restricted in power, but doing His best to overcome evil with good ; and on this he based a

truly noble appeal for conformity to his own ideal of life, as an endeavour to help God in the stupendous task of governing, healing, and perfecting humanity.

I have often lingered with satisfaction over those lines which only came to the world when their author had gone out to read the great secret ; because they show how Mill's "rational scepticism" made a tardy but wistful approach towards Christian hopes and sentiments. I prize them also because they put into words the nebulous thoughts of many common men, and agree with the instinctive preference of all true hearts for goodness as better than strength. But most of all I value them because calculated to quicken our appreciation of Christ's answer to the problem they discuss.

Every Christian will respect Mill's contention that it were infinitely better to believe in a God of limited power, who loves us, than to acknowledge an omnipotent autocrat to whom the ruin of millions is no grief. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, and, as Paul wrote, even we who have the earnest of the Spirit do groan within ourselves ; and there can be no effectual consolation and no convincing plea for faith, unless the Creator has some sympathy with creation in her pangs. Our hearts can never be quite right with His heart while left to think of Him as having coldly laid out plans which involve universal suffering of which He remains an impas-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 33.



sive spectator. The cross is therefore precious because it reveals the fact that God is not a mere passionless watcher of an agonising evolution, but is Himself a partaker of the universal travail, and has been constrained by love to take the chief labour on Himself. The cross is thus an objective evidence of the truth which Paul declares in marvellous words: "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered": and in this He maketh intercession, "according to the Will of God."

The cross has no special function to declare God omnipotent. It makes no effort to correct our definition of this term, or to provide a formula by which we can correlate the infinite attributes of wisdom, power and love. But neither affirming nor denying omnipotence, it instructs the world that dynamic *power, whether infinite or finite*, can only have a place of subordinate ministry when acting as the servant of God's heart in the spiritual realm. The force which gave form and motion to the universe has in itself no power of appeal to the affections; it cannot penetrate to the secret springs of emotion and volition to turn men from their evil desires and purposes, and bring them as contrite suppliants to their Father's feet. Hence the cross reveals the ineffectiveness of mere omnipotence, to bring order out of a moral chaos. There is something deeper therefore in the Saviour's grief than a simple sorrow for the wrecking of His works, or for the sufferings of infatuated persons. It is a sorrow

that can best be likened to that of an affluent and sagacious human father when he beholds a son running down the road to ruin, and is conscious not only of an intense desire to save him, but of ample knowledge and resources for the purpose ; yet finds his affectionate desire thwarted, and all his wealth, influence and wisdom as though they were not, because his gracious gifts are turned into lasciviousness, while his pleadings and counsels are despised, and his affection flouted or denied.

This kind of sorrow, which only the great and good are capable of feeling, and which must needs be keenest in the greatest and the best, is most beautifully expressed in the parables of Christ, but best of all in the life and death of Him who uttered them. It has often been pleaded that there is no atonement in the parable of the prodigal son—and this is true. But those who dilate upon this fact to disparage the idea of atonement, would do well to observe, that some of the indispensable marks of a perfect fatherhood are also absent. There is no sign of any fatherly effort to avert the son's calamitous experiment, no urging to remain at home, no warning of danger, no cautionary counsel, no solicitous following of the prodigal's career, no attempt to maintain or to re-open correspondence, no endeavour of any kind to induce repentance ; and even after repentance has begun we hear of no encouragement to return. If we are to treat the parable as a denial of every doctrine that it does not teach, we must regard it as teaching that God is a Father who feels nothing

and does nothing for His erring children, until they spontaneously arise and tread the homeward way. But against such barbarous treatment of Christ's words, common sense protests. If the parable describes no atonement in words, it is in itself a proof that atonement was in the heart of the speaker. It is instinct with the passion of a peacemaker between God and man ; and coupled with the parables of the seeking Shepherd and the Housewife it compels us to think of Christ as standing in the midst of our " far country " to declare to us our Father's sorrow, and to bid us think of God as one who laments the loss of any single human child, and sends His well-beloved Son to seek and find and bring us home. One of the finest features of the parable is lost, unless we are led to contrast the spirit of Christ with the Pharisaic spirit of the elder brother He depicted. The one would not go in, because the prodigal had been received ; the other willingly came out, because the Father's heart was yearning to recover His lost sons. Every word and every touch which depicts the father's joy in welcoming his contrite son, connotes a corresponding sorrow during the period of absence. The gladness with which he killed the fatted calf and called for music and dancing compels us to consider Him as being grieved throughout those days when having enough and to spare, he was obliged by His very love to leave the wanderer to the discipline of exile, famine and shame.

I have used this parable to illustrate the kind of sorrow I desire to predicate of God ; but even when

combined with the two parables of seeking it remains deficient. We may strengthen the picture by reading John x. as an expansion of the idea of seeking contained in the parables of the lost sheep and the missing coin. The journey into the wilderness to recover a single sheep is richly significant, but it rather implies than exhibits a sacrificial labour and sorrow. But in the Johannine discourse we see the Good Shepherd as a sufferer, a willing, and indeed a determined sufferer, who lays down His life for the sheep. Thus we are free, nay compelled, to bring the death of Christ into the parables of Luke, and to find in Calvary an expression of that immeasurable grief which constrained the Father to acquire a new power over human hearts,—a power which even as omnipotent He could not otherwise possess. The blood of Christ tells us of an anguish so unspeakable that it embraced the cross as its only relief, because it was in God's sight the only method by which He could fulfil His own joy as man's Creator.

Christ not obscurely indicated these feelings in several utterances. "I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished !" (Luke xii. 50.) "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John xii. 32.) "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth by itself alone ; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24). They are also plainly announced by the author of Hebrews: "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and

through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author (*τὸν ἀρχηγὸν*) of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebr. ii. 10.) "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebr. xii. 2.)

Many passages of kindred significance might be quoted, but these suffice to justify what has been said. They set before us thoughts too deep for words, and teach us to fill up the parables of Christ with all the meaning of His blood. The Father of the Prodigal Man was no inert unsympathetic being, who felt no pangs of bereavement, for He sent forth His well-beloved Son to seek and save the lost. All that this Son endured in the far country has expressed to us the Father's heart, and all the tears and agonies of Christ, which were endured to bring us unto God, declare that God loved the world after this sacrificial manner, because so, and only so, He could take to Himself the kind of power which He required for the reconciliation of "all things to Himself." (Col. i. 20.)

8. Without death Christ would not have given the strongest possible demonstration of God's antagonism to sin. God has taken many means to make this clear, but none so potent as the death of His Son. The Divine abhorrence of iniquity is written in our consciences and attested by our self-

reproaches, our fears of judgment, our anger against those who injure us, or wrong our friends and neighbours. In clear tones this hatred of evil is proclaimed in many ancient laws before which mankind has bowed; not only in the Mosaic law, but in all laws, however imperfect, which have sprung from man's moral intuitions, enlightened and developed by experience. God's hatred of sin has also been attested by the denunciations of prophets, and by the chastisements and judgments inflicted upon those families and nations which have most flagrantly outraged the common law of righteousness. But the death of Christ has deepened the sense of awe, and intensified the conviction that God is eternally antagonistic to sin. No interpretation of the words Christ uttered when handing the wine-cup to His disciples can eliminate the idea that the shedding of His blood was associated in His own mind with "the remission of sins." When the light of these words is flashed into the darkness of Calvary, we behold an everlasting witness that sin is so obnoxious that God will spare no blood that may be needful for its extermination, and that as He spared not His well-beloved Son for this purpose, so, if necessary, He would not spare the blood of nations or of all mankind. If the Son of God died to take away sin, His death is not only the measure of God's love for men, but also the measure of His abhorrence of the evil from which He rescues them at such inestimable cost. No terrors of judgment, no fires of penal anguish, and still less any words

of spoken detestation could be so impressive as the cross.

9. If Christ had not died He would have failed to reveal to mankind the unspeakable difficulty and costliness of mercy.

In recent years many writers and preachers have declared or implied that forgiveness is a very simple and easy thing, and that consequently there was no necessity for the death of Christ. As a protest against the dogma that God cannot righteously forego punishment such teachings have a value, but they must none the less be deplored as superficial, and, I fear, morally debilitating. In one sense it is easy for God to forgive, inasmuch as He delights in mercy, while judgment is His strange work, but the central thought of Christianity is that God can only delight Himself in mercy at a great cost to Himself. In our study of Propitiation and Redemption we have seen that although Christ does not buy God's mercy yet human redemption is costly to God ; and deep down below all disfiguring and objectionable dogmas and phrases about the "price of pardon" there lives in millions of Christian minds a truly apostolic and most sanctifying conviction that the blood of Christ represents the measure of the difficulty and costliness of our salvation.

Some who admit that forgiveness may be costly to God still deprecate the suggestion that He has been at pains to impress His creatures with a burdensome sense of the fact. Such an objection is plausible, but it overlooks the vital reasons which

exist for bringing home to men the truth that salvation is not easy even for God. It is indeed true that a noble spirit will not ostentatiously parade its sacrifices for the sake of winning admiration or gratitude. The most loving service that one man can render to another is that which seeks only to do good, "hoping for nothing again." "Love seeketh not her own," but always another's benefit, and the holiest sacrifices are those which fine souls make in secret, so that no humbling or saddening perception of their painfulness may detract from the happiness they confer. Probably no one will question that this is indeed a law of love. But it is not a complete or adequate truth, for the law of self-effacement in sacrifice can have no conceivable application to any case in which the supreme blessing to be conferred is a knowledge of the benefactor as a person. The Creator can impart no boon so great as a true understanding of Himself as the Lord exercising loving kindness and righteousness in the earth. In comparison with this blessing, those benefits which He can bestow while hiding Himself are as nothing. This is eternal life, to know God and Jesus Christ Whom He hath sent, and to object to the idea of Divine manifestation in sacrifice as a form of self-display is to confound things which are as fundamentally different as are Love and Vanity.

Closely connected with this thought there is the further consideration, that if the costliness of redemption had been hidden, men would not have been duly affected by Divine mercy, because in-



capable of appreciating its intrinsic value or its moral nature. In other words, the revelation of the cost is an integral part of God's redemptive method, and without it there would have been no redemption.

With some apparent exceptions, it is notorious that things which cost the giver little are lightly taken, and awaken no deep sense of gratitude. It is true that cheap gifts may under some circumstances be prized more highly than things of great cost. A flower may mean more than a gem. A crude piece of handwork may be dearer, for the worker's sake, than the lavish presents of a millionaire. But these familiar facts do not alter the truth that when a real service of love has been rendered, the worth of it is always gauged by the sacrifice involved. When David poured out the water from the well of Bethlehem upon the ground, it was not because he prized it little, but because he prized the lives and the love of his heroic followers more. He was ashamed to have his own thirst quenched while others were pining, and grieved to think that those mighty men of valour should have risked their lives to gratify His wish. To his last hour he would remember those men, and would value their devotion as among the chief riches of his kingdom. A rich man's largesse begets some gratitude, but the poor widow's division of her cruse of oil and barrel of meal was beautiful in the eyes of God, and won, not only the exiled prophet's love and reverence, but a place among the world's choicest

memorials. In like manner the two mites which another widow cast into the Temple treasury received the praise of Christ, because in giving them she gave all that she had.

The same law holds good in the moral realm. The easy lenity of parents who pass by their children's faults with careless readiness inspires no respect for themselves, no reverence for virtue, and no abhorrence of evil. Such treatment fosters a low estimate of the difference between right and wrong. It makes further transgression easy, and, if habitual, its effect is to narcotise the conscience. Hence a mere promulgation of the truth that God is ready to forgive, without any manifestation of God's hatred of sin, and of His inexorable resolve to by no means clear the guilty, would have put a premium upon sin, and would have been equivalent to an abrogation of His law. God can only promise to bestow forgiveness under conditions which will make mercy a minister of righteousness. Forgiveness without repentance is simply the condonation of sin. Hence it is, and must be, difficult for God to forgive sin, not because He is reluctant to show mercy, not because mercy is essentially subversive of righteousness; but because it is difficult to lead free agents to fulfil the moral conditions of forgiveness. God can only cancel the guilt of disobedience as the spirit of disobedience is cast out. He can only cease to condemn the sinner, when He has induced the sinner to condemn himself. He can only take away sin, as He leads the wrongdoer to forsake it

in heart, and at least prospectively in life. Until we see the greatness of God's sacrifice to induce these eternal conditions of forgiveness in mankind, we can never be duly affected by the moral energy of His love.

It is when we see this significance of Christ's blood that it becomes a cleansing fountain, and washes the very thoughts and intents of the heart, so that everything which grieves God becomes hateful, and a new desire to please Him becomes the animating principle of life. It is this perception of costliness which gives the believer in Christ a motive power which no refinement of taste, no craving for happiness, no terrors of law, and no dread of damnation can furnish. It is this which has made the gospel of forgiveness a quickener of the conscience among the highest and the lowest races of mankind. It is this which awakens a sense of obligation to obey and serve the Redeemer, and throughout the most progressive course of discipleship continues to preserve from self-righteousness, and spurs the noblest servants to increased endeavour; and when at last a servant, who has won the praise of human multitudes, lays down his sword and trowel, it is this thought of God's expenditure of Christ which humbles him to say, "I am an unprofitable servant," and sends him heavenward not to claim reward, but looking for the final grace which has yet to be revealed. Most beautifully, therefore, does Peter, dwelling on this thought of infinite indebtedness to the Father, write, "Where-

fore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance; but like as He which calleth you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living. . . . And if ye call on Him as Father . . . pass the time of your sojourning in fear: knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold from your vain manner of life, handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ . . . who was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i, 12—21).

Reviewing our prolonged discussion of the significance of Christ's death, the question may arise whether believers in Christ have usually appreciated or even perceived so many separate rays of revelation beaming from the cross; and again, whether the greater portion of mankind has any intellectual need for such an analytical interpretation. To such questions there can be only one reply. No single mind may feel all the difficulties which have been referred to, acutely or simultaneously at any one stage of its experience, and specific answers are

required only for specific inquiries and doubts. But this in no way detracts from the importance of the particular aspects of truth which have been presented, nor does it suggest that any single item could be spared. The labouring man who when awakened in the morning finds the earth illumined by the sun goes forth to his daily task, and walks in the light with the same gladness as is felt by a professor of natural science, and without daylight he could not do his work or be sustained in life. He has no theory of light, knows of no difference between the rays which warm and those which brighten the world, and has no notion of the manner in which the many-coloured beauty of the earth and sky is produced. Since man arrived on this globe the sun has done its work for him, and would do it still if every scientific treatise were destroyed. But this most certain fact does not falsify or discredit the progressive discoveries of natural science, nor does it affect the truth that these discoveries have been conducive in countless ways to the comfort, convenience, and safety of cities, to the furtherance of art, the healing of disease, and the preservation of health.

In a similar way multitudes of simple souls have rejoiced in the light of the cross, and have experienced the healing of its beams, without defining the manner in which it has silenced their murmurs, bound up their broken hearts, dispelled their gloomy fears, and filled them with peace and joy in believing

in the love of God. The wonderful power of the cross lies in the fact that it does not attack man's unbelief controversially, but sheds forth a light in which the causes of unbelief vanish. The remedy works, not as an articulate denial of falsehoods or a logical refutation of suspicions, but as the revelation of a Divine Person, and the faith it elicits is not a mere belief of theological doctrines, but a belief in God, as the faithful Creator, the Benignant Ruler and the Righteous Father of men.

This faith is something infinitely deeper, stronger and more precious than any intellectual expression of its content, or any reasoned application of it to the explanation of particular events, of personal experience, or of abstract problems. This is a faith which overcomes the world, because it justifies the finite intellect in awaiting without dismay the solution of all the most daunting problems which present themselves in the past history and present condition of the world. But while insisting upon this view, we must still affirm that the Gospel would be no remedy for the world's sin and misery, unless it contained within its ample fulness an implicit contradiction of every lie which sin can breed in alienated minds, and an answer to every question which can harass an inquiring spirit when in quest of religious truth. It is because the Death of Christ contains a fulness of meaning which may be resolved into an answer to all these questions, that it is the power of God to extirpate those thoughts and feelings which are the

roots of sin in human nature. It reveals Love in all the splendour of its moral purity, and in its relation to us as sinners, and as the victims of sin. It was necessary for man's redemption, because by no lesser means could the same effects have been produced. Apart from the Life of Jesus Christ, and apart from the discipline of earlier ages, the Death would have been as a book written in an unknown tongue, but without this Death all previous messages of mercy would have been as an unfinished letter, and all preceding discipline of the race by law and prophecy and chastening experience, would have been in vain. The human intellect never could have devised so marvellous a sign as that of the uplifted Son of Man, but since it has been given, we know that without it the human heart must have starved as in a famine-stricken land, because destitute of any meat on which faith, hope and love could live. The Cross shines before us in Divine beauty as the sun shines in the firmament, not only excelling but paling every other light, because the blood of Christ is the solemn attestation of the truth that God is Love, and Love is perfect Righteousness. God thus loved the world, as Christ Himself declared, that men might be able to believe in His love for them, and so might not perish through ignorance and alienation, but be born again into the eternal life which comes of fellowship with Him. It was not conceivably a secondary or incidental purpose of Christ to shine into our hearts the light of the knowledge

of the Glory of God. He is our Salvation because He is our Light, and the light which shines through Him, as a Lamp uplifted in the midst of darkness, is the effulgence of the Father's Glory, and the Father's Glory is the fulness of His grace and truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 34.



## LECTURE VIII

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

WE have now to ask whether the view thus far presented of the place and value of Faith in man's salvation is complete, or whether it requires to be supplemented. This question does not affect the soundness of anything that has been here advanced. If faith has a value not yet exhibited, this must tend to verify our principles. The more important faith is, and the more stress we find laid upon it as a means or condition of salvation, the more certain we must feel that its elicitation was a primary object of God in sending His Son to live and die among men. Nothing can be said in exaltation of faith which can shake the conclusion that its provocation was indispensable to the accomplishment of God's purposes, or that the death of Christ was necessary for its production, and for the awakening of that love which is the fulfilment of Divine Law and the essence of righteousness in God and man.

Taking our stand, therefore, on this solid ground.

we may proceed to ask, "Is Faith represented in Scripture solely as a converting and sanctifying force; or is it also placed before us as the ground or condition of a Divine act of grace in which man has no part, and which does not await or depend upon, but rather precedes and becomes a factor in, the ethical evolution of Christian life? In other words, we have to inquire whether God justifies believers *only* in the sense of setting them in right relations with Himself and influencing their character through the rectifying power of the gospel, or whether He justifies believers as such, so releasing them from condemnation before their characters are conformed to all the requirements of His perfect will.

It is difficult to state these alternatives without wrapping up a fallacy in our words, because faith and Christian character are not separable, although distinguishable in thought. In a profound sense no character can be right in God's sight which is not rooted in faith. Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for distrust is in itself a rank offence, and inevitably brings forth fruit in disobedience. Thus Faith is character, and that which produces faith in God transforms the hidden man of the heart at which God looks and by which man is judged.

These statements somewhat anticipate the results of the following discussion, but they are necessary to a clear perception of the question awaiting decision. We need to know whether justification by faith means simply and solely a spiritual rectification

of life by faith, or whether it means a judicial act of God whereby the believer is delivered from condemnation. The question is not whether the believer in Christ is ushered into a life of filial love and obedience, and is thereby reset in his due place in the spiritual order as a child of God. No Christian thinker has ever doubted the sonship of believers, and, although the doctrine of regeneration has taken many extraordinary forms, it appears in some form in all Christian theologies. Hence the question before us is not, "Are men justified by God as a kingly Lawgiver and Judge, or are they begotten to sonship by God as a Father?" but "Is there a judicial act of justification as well as a paternal begetting, and if so, how can these be harmonised?"

It may be feared that to many minds such an inquiry will be distasteful. It is often said, and not without some reason, that the very word justification has to-day become repugnant to English congregations, and it is certain that in countless pulpits it is seldom if ever used. As a reaction from the passionate discussions and the wearisome technical disquisitions which once abounded, this disuse of the term is not unnatural. It must also be confessed that the Latinised term is itself repellent, and serves to hide the sequence of thought in Paul's great argument, because it conceals the affinity of the word *dikaiōō* (to justify) with the words *dikaïos* (righteous) and *dikaïosunē* (righteousness). It would have been a great blessing to English readers if all these terms had been rendered in Anglo-Saxon, so

preserving their relationship and avoiding the harshness and coldness of the Latin term. But, however strongly we may regret the original and now irreparable mistake of early translators, the word justify stands for an aspect of truth which cannot be neglected without loss, and whatever our feeling about its ecclesiastical misuse, I believe that the teaching of the New Testament on the subject will commend itself as simple, beautiful, and evidently true, and as a potent instrument for the furtherance of faith and righteousness.

The question thus opened can best be considered in a review of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

### *The Righteousness of God.*

It has often been said that justification by faith is the theme of Paul's greatest epistle, but this is scarcely accurate. Undoubtedly Paul was stirred to defend this doctrine against the assaults of hostile Jews, and to so expound it as to relieve the scruples of many ill-instructed Christians, but while the motive of his letter may be thus defined, the subject of it is far more comprehensive, viz., the Righteousness of God.

It was only by dealing with this vaster subject that Paul could effectually dispose of the several objections which were urged against his gospel. His opponents differed not a little in their opinions, and still more in character and spirit, but they were united by the distinctively Jewish conception of God

as a Lawgiver and Judge. It was not a false thought, nor can we eliminate it from any worthy idea of the Supreme Being. But it is an inadequate thought. The idea of God which begins and ends in a personification of legal justice, logically leaves no room for the idea of grace, and therefore excludes the doctrine of justification by faith. Hence, in order to vindicate his doctrine, the apostle was compelled to exhibit an enlarged and glorified conception of the Righteousness of God.

This task involved a consideration of God's righteousness under several aspects, and the epistle may be logically divided into corresponding sections. It deals with God's righteousness in (1) addressing all men as sinners ; (2) in finally judging all men by • Jesus Christ ; (3) in justifying them that believe in Jesus Christ ; (4) in establishing a kingdom in which believing Jews and Gentiles are placed on an equality as the spiritual seed of Abraham. These topics represent the logical structure of the Epistle to the Romans.

In a pregnant sentence Paul discloses the motive of his epistle, and indicates the general nature of his reply to detractors. " I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth . . . for therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith, as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith " (Rom. i. 16, 17).

By omitting the words " to the Jew first and also to the Greek," we bring together clauses which

ought never to be separated. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, because it is a revelation of God's righteousness, and of this in some way which is intimately connected with salvation. The precise relation of the two is not stated, but the teaching clearly is that Divine self-revelation is effected through the gospel, which preaches forgiveness, and this gospel issues in faith in godly life, in harmony with the ancient oracle, "The just shall live by faith."

Having thus linked the thoughts of Righteousness, Revelation, Faith and Godliness, Paul proceeds to expound and defend the doctrine which he was supposed to be ashamed to preach in the great imperial city. He did not sit down to write a systematic treatise in which abstract truth might be stated with cold exactitude. He wrote with the passion of a preacher to convince and persuade others for their good. He sought to overcome prejudice and to win, rather than to master his readers. Hence we find abrupt transitions, heated exclamations and interjected appeals to heart and conscience as well as to the reason. Failing to apprehend these facts, we may fail to find any logical sequence in his letter, but bearing these in mind we shall be able to appreciate the fire of sympathy which burned within, moving him now to indignation, now to pity, but always stirring him to bring his readers, not as defeated controversialists, but as humbled fellow sinners to the feet of God.

1. At the outset of his task it was necessary to

insist on the righteousness of God in including all men under a charge of sin. The gospel has no meaning for just men who need no repentance, for it assumes that all who hear it deserve condemnation. While a man thinks "I have not sinned," he cannot be reconciled to God, for only as a sinner can he believe in God's righteousness either in judging or in showing mercy. Perhaps an offer to forgive one who considers himself innocent is more aggravating and insulting than the infliction of undeserved punishment. It was in this way that self-righteous Jews felt affronted by the gospel which put them on a level with publicans, harlots and pagans.

Having to combat this resentful feeling, Paul's chief task was to convince the Jews of sin. But before attempting this task he naturally began by rehearsing the familiar facts of Gentile depravity. His black picture of pagan life has been censured as exaggerated, but it required no marshalling of evidence for those who lived in Rome, and the literature of the age confirms the truth of every charge. So far as the Gentiles were concerned, the difficulty was not to prove the facts, but to so far enlighten their consciences as to produce a sense of shame. Given the Christian or the Jewish conception of sin, there was no man in Rome of any nationality who would dispute the assertion that without exception the Gentiles had all sinned.<sup>1</sup>

The only comment on this indictment which seems

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 35.

called for is in regard to what it does not include. Paul does not say that all men are born under condemnation on account of Adam's transgression or its inherited virus in the blood. The only sin to which he refers is that of which men may be personally convicted at the bar of conscience.

Having stated the transgressions which were rife among pagans, Paul invokes the self-judgment of his Jewish readers, and urges each censor of others to deal faithfully with himself and to stand in awe of the impartial judgment of God. When he comes to deal specifically with Jews (cap. ii. 17), his references to iniquity are hypothetical, or take the form of searching questions, such as, "Dost thou commit adultery?" He does not reason like a lawyer who strives to prove to a jury the guilt of an accused person. No conviction of another man's sin would serve his purpose. "What is thy sin?" he asks of each, and leaves each to make reply to his own soul. All this is most unsatisfactory as the proof of an abstract doctrine of sin, but it has made the second chapter of this epistle one of the most heart-searching appeals to the human conscience which even the Scriptures can furnish. My business is not to examine it in detail. I am satisfied to urge that no man in the Roman Church could have read this chapter without confessing to himself, "I have sinned"; thus owning the justice of the gospel in assuming that all men stand in need of mercy.

2. The gospel announces a general judgment of ✓



mankind by Jesus Christ, and it was necessary for Paul to emphasise this fact as proof that his doctrine did not dispense with an administration of justice. It was also incumbent upon him to vindicate the method of judgment as equitable to all mankind.

Men are prone to regard Divine judgment with dread, and are not slow to question the possibility of applying a single standard of duty to people of all ages and lands, with their vast differences of culture and opportunity. But Paul presents it as an event to which the race may look forward with satisfaction. If the message of Christianity had run: "There shall be no Divine inquiry, no redress of wrongs, no exposure of false pretences, no clearance of misjudged character, and no ultimate award of a lot in accordance with men's works," every wakeful conscience would have protested against such encouragement to anarchy. A moral governor who does not execute judgment is worse than the criminals who make havoc in his realm. Hence the apostle insists that the declaration of universal judgment is an integral part of his gospel.

But the assurance of judgment, though essential, is not enough to convince us of God's righteousness. Hebrew poets had cried aloud for the manifestation of Divine anger against evil-doers and had bidden the righteous rejoice before the Lord, because He would surely come to judge the nations with equity and truth. But this great hope had been tintured with a not unnatural but certainly rather selfish

patriotism. Confidence in God's justice had never given birth to a doctrine which foreigners and men of strange religions could revere as impartial. To command universal confidence we need a doctrine of judgment which will give no unfair advantage to those who have had a large share of privilege on earth. It must declare a judgment which will not only smite the openly wicked, but will search out the hidden iniquities of thought, motive and spirit, and will estimate conduct not merely in relation to an objective standard, but in relation to subjective conditions, to inherited advantages and disadvantages, and to the helps and hindrances of environment. This immense desideratum is presented in the gospel. Every man is to be judged according to his light. The Judge will be One who has experienced temptation and knows all the secrets of human hearts. Every man's memory will bear an unerring witness to himself. His own thoughts will be quickened to pronounce a judicial verdict, and by the unalterable law of his being they will become God's executioner to carry out the sentence on himself. In such a tribunal, presided over and guided by Christ, there can be no injustice, no inequality, no mistake, and no respect of persons.

It is not suggested that such a judgment has no terrors, but it is terrible only to those who ought to tremble. It is peculiarly dreadful to the man who, under ordinary judgment, would escape most easily. It is fitted to alarm those who know and exult in the knowledge of God's will, yet do it not ; but its most

threatening aspect is reserved for those who sternly impose a yoke of law on their fellows, and dare to act as judges while themselves guilty of transgression. This was the common fault of Jews and Judaising Christians in the first age of the Church, and to them Paul addressed his most fervid remonstrance. "Not the hearers of a law are righteous before God, but the doers of a law (whatever law they know) shall be justified" or accounted righteous by the Judge; and in the final assize every condemnation which men have pronounced on others will recoil upon themselves with all the certainty and severity of a divinely aroused self-judgment. Law gives the knowledge of sin, and the higher the law the keener is the moral judgment, and the more terrible its sentence upon self. This is the tremendous truth which Paul pressed home upon self-complacent Jews.

This vindication of God's righteousness in accounting all men sinners and in judging them according to the measure of their moral light, left the Jew without a reasonable reply. Salvation by law is hereby shown to be inconceivable. If, therefore, there is to be salvation for men it must be provided apart from law. Hence Paul proceeds to discuss the subject of God's righteousness in relation to the central and most distinctive truth of his gospel.

3. The gospel proclaims the remission of sins to all who believe, and Paul sought to convince his readers that God's righteousness not only permits such a message but is therein most lustro-  
usly re-

vealed. In dealing with this part of his subject he was very bold. He was not content to argue that a doctrine of forgiveness runs through the ancient Scriptures, though in this way he might have confounded his opponents. Nor was he satisfied to speak of Christ as the truest revealer of God's mercy, for although such a doctrine would be true it would be irrelevant to his argument. To meet the scruples of legalists he had to show not only that God can, and does forgive, as the great prophets and psalmists of Israel had ever taught, but that the forgiveness which their fathers had prayed for and believed in was an outcome of Divine righteousness. His theme in this place is not merely the mercy of God, *but the righteousness of mercy*. He asserts that this most adorable attribute of God is revealed to human faith in Jesus Christ, who thus becomes the propitiatory, the Mercy Seat, in whom God can meet with sinful men and commune with them, and through whom He can remit their sins (Rom. iii. 20—26).

We have already considered this passage in our study of Propitiation, and again while endeavouring to interpret the significance of Christ's death. We have seen that there is no suggestion here that Christ did or suffered anything which made it righteous for God to remit sin. His work was to demonstrate the righteousness of mercy, and so to clear the way for its world-wide administration. Resting on this conclusion we have now to investigate the meaning of the word Justification, and to appreciate the new element imported into the subject

by the mention of Jesus Christ as the object of faith where the Old Testament speaks of God.

The supreme question to be considered is whether by justification we are to understand a judicial act or a making righteous ethically, and setting us in our true place in the spiritual order by imparting a filial spirit and therewith the privileges of Sonship to God.

In discussing this question I have to bespeak the reader's patient attention, because the view I desire to commend differs essentially from that which is usually taken by those who affirm the forensic significance of Paul's language, and yet I cannot deny that their affirmation is correct. In my judgment the language is forensic, yet I believe that Paul's great object was to eliminate the legal element from our conception of the believer's status before God. I make this preliminary statement that no hasty conclusions may prejudice my argument to prove that justification is set before us by the apostle as a judicial act.

I gladly avow my sympathy with the spirit and object of Thomas Erskine's admirable book on "The Spiritual Order." The whole Church of Christ owes a debt of gratitude to Erskine and the notable group of thinkers through whom he influenced the last generation. His aim was to spiritualise Christian thought, and to transport men's minds from the arid region of scholasticism to the warm and fertile paradise of Biblical simplicity. He wanted to take us away from the law-courts and fill us with

thoughts and feelings which can live only in a Father's house. In order to accomplish this purpose it seemed to him necessary to get rid of the judicial conception of justification, because it appeared to him utterly foreign to the idea of Sonship and fatal to the cultivation of childlike trust, because savouring of legal claim on the part of those who have been justified. He disliked it also because he thought it involved something akin to a legal fiction. In these views Erskine has been widely followed by many who have not seen his writings; and by not a few who have scarcely heard his name.

In former years I gave a most favourable consideration to Erskine's contention that *dikaioō* is not a forensic term; but his arguments were never convincing, and after much thought were dismissed as unsound. For some time this conclusion was a source of keen regret and seemed to be fraught with serious theological consequences; but before long I perceived not only that Erskine had erred critically, but that his error tended rather to frustrate than to promote his religious purpose, because it was only by using *dikaioō* in a forensic sense that Paul was able to meet the objections of Jewish opponents, and provide a rational account of man's deliverance from bondage to law. Indeed, it is not too much to say that by denying that justification is a judicial act we expose the apostle to a charge of deliberate evasion, and break up his epistle to the Romans into a mere farrago of illogical fragments.

The philological argument is not unimportant,

but it is necessarily inconclusive. The forensic use of *dikaioō* can certainly be sustained by ample evidence, but no amount of evidence culled from classical sources would suffice to prove that Paul thus employed it, if such a meaning were demonstrably inconsistent with the drift of his argument or with the spirit of his teaching. On this account I shall rest the case on a critical examination of New Testament usage and a general survey of the logical structure of Romans.

Turning to the New Testament we find the verb twice in Mat. xii. 37, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Here the word "justified" is obviously antithetic to "condemned," and the context shows that Christ was explicitly speaking of "the day of judgment."

In Luke vii. 29 we are told that "the people and the publicans justified God," *i.e.*, they recognised His righteousness and openly declared their judgment. In x. 29 we read that the lawyer who had tempted Christ, and had felt himself condemned by Christ's reply, tried to "justify" himself. This cannot mean that he tried to make himself a righteous man or tried to readjust his position, but that he tried to make himself out to be right in the judgment of the audience and thus to discredit the implied condemnation of Christ. In xvi. 15 Christ charges the Pharisees with an attempt to "justify" themselves before men, *i.e.*, to secure a favourable verdict at the bar of human opinion. In xviii. 14

we are told that the publican who, instead of justifying himself, confessed his sin before God, "went down to his house justified." According to Acts xiii. 39, Paul said to certain men of Israel "Be it known unto you, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The association of "remission of sins" with "justified from all things," forbids us to think of moral rectification, or anything less than a release from condemnation, as the blessing proclaimed. There were many sins for which the law prescribed punishment "without mercy," and no civil authority was allowed to remit these penalties. Paul declared that Christ was under no such restrictions.

In the epistle to the Romans *dikaioō* occurs in several passages where its meaning is unmistakable. In ii. 12 we are taken into the Divine tribunal to observe the method of judgment, and are told that "as many as have sinned under law shall be judged by law: for not the hearers of a law are righteous before God, but the doers of a law shall be justified." The case of these righteous persons is, of course, purely hypothetical, but the declaration is that if such persons existed, they would be justified by the great Judge. In iii. 4 we still meet with the idea of a judgment passed, though it is passed by man on God, *i.e.*, He is found to be true, and all accusing mouths are stopped. In verse 20 we learn that a



chief effect of the law is that it brings men within the pale of God's judgment by giving them a clear knowledge of sin. Hence it is inferred that no activities of obedience to the law of which man is capable can be so perfect as to merit justification when brought to trial before God. Up to this point, therefore, the apostle has been dealing most distinctly with judicial acts. He has gone with his adversaries into the heavenly Forum, and has proved the hopelessness of their case if summoned before God to be judged without mercy and according to the measure of their obedience to the law in which they made their boast.

It is not necessary to review all the passages in which the term occurs. Enough has been said to prove that it is freely used to denote not an ethical process, or a readjustment of relations, but a genuine judgment of the mind on the righteousness of some act or some person, and that up to the point in Romans where our discussion centres, it is used by Paul in a strictly forensic sense. This at once brings us to consider the requirements of his argument in this place.

When clearly stated the question to be decided affects not merely the apostle's doctrine but his personal fitness to be a religious teacher. Step by step he has brought his readers to confess that if judged by a strictly legal standard, justification is impossible and condemnation inevitable; and he is about to propound a doctrine in which the same great terms are used. Was he, then, so absurd, or

so dishonest, as to play like a sophistical juggler with this word *dikaioō* by suddenly using it in a totally new sense? If we venture to say, "Yes, this is what Paul did," we shall have to impeach either his common sense, or, worse still, his common honesty.

In this section of the epistle Paul had to restate that part of his gospel which was most offensive to his fellow Israelites, viz., that which seemed to make void the law by releasing believers in Jesus Christ from their legal responsibilities. The Jews offered no opposition to the gospel as an efficient agent for the correction of life, or for the resetting of men in right relations with God. Their objection was that the gospel gave a false view of these relations, and made light of conduct. No sane man could think it unrighteous of God to make men righteous or to recover their allegiance to Himself. What the Jews denied was the possibility of sinful men being released from condemnation merely because they believed in Jesus. The justification which Paul had to defend was therefore a Divine act which afforded at least a plausible pretext for their complaint. His opponents no doubt failed to apprehend his doctrine aright, and he had not only to defend but to elucidate the gospel; but however explained, this gospel must have contained the promise of a Divine act which liberates the believer from a state of condemnation as a transgressor of the law. Subsequently Paul vindicates

the doctrine on ethical grounds, but in this chapter he asserts it in defiance of all objections.

In the closing verses of Chapter iii. Paul commends his doctrine on two grounds: (1) As in harmony with the fundamental religious principle that man's attitude before God should always be one of lowly humility, and never that of a presumptuous claimant. (2) As consonant with the truth, that there is but one God, who must necessarily deal with all mankind according to one uniform principle.

These were invaluable thoughts for Jews. To our minds they are almost axiomatic, and call for attention only as providing a logical transition to the subject discussed in Chapter iv. Paul knew that his assertion of an equal treatment of all races and classes of men would be resented as a denial of God's covenant with the family of Abraham. He anticipated the certain retort of his countrymen. "If the circumcised and the uncircumcised are to be treated alike, what advantage have we? What was the special blessing of our father Abraham?" The introduction of Abraham's case has often been criticised as out of place and inconsequential. It is, however, not only logical, but a mark of the highest genius because it supplies an argument which leaves every candid son of Abraham without a reply to Paul's doctrine of justification, except one which would assail God's treatment of the Patriarch as unrighteous.

Having started the question, What was Abraham's blessing? Paul gives a manifold reply. (1) He

states negatively that it could not have been anything which afforded Abraham a ground of glorying before God, and thence he concludes that it could not have been a recompense of good deeds, because in that case Abraham would have owed nothing to Divine grace, and could have stood with head erect before God as one who received no more than he deserved. (2) He points out again negatively that it was not circumcision. This rite, as recorded in Genesis was appointed after Abraham's justification, and was the constituted mark and seal of the righteousness of the faith previously displayed. (3) He quotes the words of Gen. xv. 6, which no religious Hebrew could disparage, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." (4) In addition to this personal blessing Abraham was assured that through his posterity the same blessing which had come upon himself should ultimately be imparted to all nations. In other words, Paul exhibits the covenant with Abraham in which the Jews gloried as nothing less than a promise that in some future age God would awaken Abrahamic faith among all peoples, and would reckon that faith to them for righteousness.

It thus transpires that in adverting to the life of an ancient patriarch, Paul was not wandering from his subject. He found in the story of Abraham an argument which stopped the mouths of those who objected to the justification of believers as a novelty, as immoral, and as involving a violation of Hebrew privilege. It proved that his doctrine, though new

in form, and containing a new element in the position it assigned to Jesus Christ, was fundamentally the same as that which gave to Hebrew Theism its most distinctive character. It made room for his contention that the statute law of Moses was a local and temporary code, interposed for educational purposes between the promise and its fulfilment by Jesus as the Author of Faith and the distributor of Abraham's blessing to the world. It made way for him to show incidentally that even while the Hebrew law reigned the continuity of Divine action was preserved, so that erring men whom the law condemned were able to obtain mercy, and, like Abraham, experienced the blessedness of "the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Above all, Paul was able to show that, according to the views of his opponents, the covenant with Abraham could never be fulfilled, whereas through the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles it was being fulfilled before their eyes.

With Rom. iv. spread out before us we ought to have no difficulty in forming a clear conception of justification by faith. The reasoning is condensed; some expressions need elucidation before their full value can be appreciated, and there are abrupt transitions which leave as much work for the reader's mind as is left by some of Browning's poems. But the general drift is unmistakable, and the most essential statements are repeated in such a variety of forms and connections that we are able to ascertain and verify their interpretation with certainty. For those

who are content to take the apostle's words in their plain natural sense this chapter is luminous and helpful ; but the task of exposition is complicated by the fact that some of the Reformers felt it necessary to correct Paul's theology, and in order to do so presumed to contradict his statement that God reckons faith for righteousness. They were afraid that, by adhering to the unadulterated language of Scripture, they would be raising faith to the level of a "good work," and to avoid this Pauline heresy they manufactured a doctrine of imputed righteousness which is utterly foreign to Paul's thought and fatal to the ethical purity and spiritual simplicity of the gospel.

Paul's language is of daylight clearness, and reproduces the frank simplicity of the statement in Genesis that "Abraham believed God, and *it* (*i.e.*, the act of believing) was reckoned to him for righteousness." "To him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith is reckoned unto him for righteousness.*" (5) But in the face of this statement the "Westminster Confession" (chapter xi.) ventures to categorically deny that God justifies men "by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness." Having thus denied the apostle's doctrine it goes on to substitute another, *viz.*, that God justifies "by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them."

If Paul had desired to teach that the merit of Christ's righteousness is reckoned to the credit of

believers, he was quite capable of putting this thought into clear, forcible words ; and inasmuch as he never did this, and the doctrine cannot possibly be stated without using terms and expressions which are not to be found in his writings, we are more than warranted in repudiating the traditional doctrine of imputed righteousness as un-Pauline, and indeed anti-Pauline. But such a summary dismissal of a doctrine dear to many Christians would be unsatisfactory, and we must therefore adopt a more tedious method.

The verb *logizomai*, to reckon or impute, is invariably used to denote a genuine estimate of facts, and never represents a merely formal or nominal, much less a fictitious attribution to things or persons, of some quality which is not actually recognised as theirs. In particular, it is never used in any sentence which suggests the ascription to one person of any merit or demerit which actually belongs to some one else. A few illustrative instances where no doctrinal issue is involved may make this sufficiently clear, e.g., “ *Reckonest* thou this, O man, who judgest them that practise such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ” (Rom. ii. 3). “ *We reckon* therefore that a man is justified by faith ” (iii. 28). “ To him that *accounteth* anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean ” (xiv. 14). “ Let a man so *account* of us ” (I. Cor. iv. 1), “ I *count* to be bold against some, which *count* of us as if we walked according to the flesh ” (II. Cor. x. 2). “ Let such an one *reckon* this, that what we are in word by letters

when we are absent, such are we also in deed when we are present" (x. 11). "I *count* not myself to have apprehended" (Phil. iii. 13). "I *reckon* that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared" (Rom. viii. 18).<sup>1</sup>

These quotations may not determine the force of the word more certainly than the oft-repeated statements in Rom. iv., but they may render it more obvious to those who read the doctrinal passages with minds clouded by traditional misinterpretations. Taken together they leave no room for reasonable doubt that *logizomai* always means a genuine act of judgment. Hence we are constrained to admit that Paul affirms a veritable judgment of God's mind when He reckons faith for righteousness to them that believe in Himself as having delivered Jesus for our trespasses and raised Him up for our justification. In like manner we are required to believe that when God ceases to impute sin it is not because He shuts His eyes to man's misdeeds, or permits them to be covered up and hidden from His view, or calls them by anything but their true name, but because in His righteous judgment they no longer represent the hidden man of the heart.<sup>2</sup>

Having arrived at this conclusion it becomes necessary to ask whether we can discern any quality in faith, and particularly faith in Jesus Christ as the gift of God for our Salvation, which can explain God's thought of its righteousness; and if so, How

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 36.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix, Notes 37 and 38



does this Divine recognition stand related on the one side to Law and on the other side to Grace?

No man, however distinguished as a religious leader, can be regarded as an authority on such a subject, but we may derive some strength and light from the opinions of two such men as John Wicliffe and Martin Luther.

Wicliffe had no hesitation in saying that there is a righteousness in faith. As a schoolman he distinguished between "*meritum de condigno*" and "*meritum de congruo*," and while strenuously denying that faith possessed the former, he insisted quite as firmly that it possessed the latter. By denying that faith has *meritum de condigno*, Wicliffe denied that faith has any such merit as could constitute a claim on God. He dwelt with great constancy on the thought of God's grace as the source of salvation, and emphatically of the believer's justification. What God bestows on men is absolutely a free gift, and never to be thought of as the payment of a debt. But he justly observed that while a gift cannot be earned, or bought, the most liberal giver would be unwise and even culpable if he dispensed his gifts without regard to the fitness of things. If God justified the suspicious and the unbelieving, His action would shock us by its immoral perversity, and by its irrational encouragement of what is inherently wrong, and fraught with social disaster. If God conferred His rewards on unrepentant evil-doers, He would be the worst evil-doer in the universe, and would be courting rebellion and insult. But when God

pronounces His approval of Faith, and bestows his blessings on those who put their trust in Him, we can see congruity, wisdom and equity. He is not a paymaster, or a debtor discharging a legal claim. He is acting as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, but He is not unrighteous, nor does He encourage disloyalty, or spread confusion in His realm. These are not Wicliffe's words, but they fairly reproduce and illustrate his thought ; and they may most usefully be allowed to lay at least a basis for a sound and scriptural estimate of what Paul calls "the righteousness of faith."

Luther, though a less subtle thinker than Wicliffe, had perhaps a deeper insight into the intrinsic value of faith in the estimation of God. He fastened on the words of Rom. iv. 20, where it is said of Abraham that he "waxed strong through faith, *giving glory to God*," and from them he drew the great thought that "faith in God maketh the chiefest worship, the chiefest duty, the chiefest obedience, and the chiefest sacrifice . . . . The power thereof is infinite and inestimable ; for it giveth glory unto God, which is the highest service that can be given to Him. Now, to give glory unto God, is to believe in Him, to count Him true, wise, righteous, merciful, almighty ; briefly it is to acknowledge Him to be the author and giver of all goodness . . . . no majesty or divinity remaineth to God where faith is not. And the chiefest thing that God requireth of man is, that He give unto Him His glory and His Divinity. . . . To be able to give that glory unto God, it is the wisdom of wisdoms,

the righteousness of righteousness, the religion of religions, and sacrifice of sacrifices. Hereby we may see what a high and excellent righteousness faith is, and so by the contrary, what a horrible and grievous sin infidelity is."<sup>1</sup> (Comment on Gal. iii, 6.)

To appreciate Paul's conception of the Righteousness of Faith it is necessary to clearly understand the secret of his contempt for that "righteousness which is in the law," which he was ready to cast away as refuse. The two conceptions are so sharply contrasted and so mutually exclusive that any defect in our estimate of the one must tend to obscure the significance of the other.

It is commonly assumed that Paul's denial of justification by works of the law grew out of his conviction that no man ever did, or ever can achieve a flawless obedience. That he had this conviction is certain, and it is shared by every man who knows human nature. But while Paul had this thought, and wove it into his argument again and again, it by no means accounts for the intensity of his feeling. He not merely despaired of a flawless obedience, but contemplating such an obedience as an ideal possibility, he poured contempt upon it as not merely valueless, but as positive loss when compared with the righteousness which is through faith in Christ. The argument of Phil. iii. is drawn from the writer's own experience and aspirations.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 39.

He deprecates the supposition that, judged by any human standard, he had been a moral wreck. On the contrary, he condescends for the sake of others to declare that he had more ground for self-confidence than the best of his fellow-countrymen. According to the highest Pharisaic standard of righteousness he boldly claims to have been "found blameless." He thus goes to the verge of self-righteousness in language, and can be acquitted of boastfulness only, because this momentary vaunting was the outcome of a passionate desire to magnify Christ, and to exalt the righteousness which is through faith in Him, as infinitely higher than the loftiest moral altitude to which man can climb by independent effort. He praises the righteousness of faith, not merely as superior to a defective conformity to the law, but as transcendently superior to a perfect conformity, if such a thing were possible. It is not the failure but the success of bondservice which he spurns as refuse for the sake of that which comes to men through the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Hence the Apostle's pleading with the Philippians was not that they should cleave to Christ merely because they were moral failures, and had no other hope of standing in the judgment. This would have been sound advice, and it presents an aspect of truth which no wise man will pretend to despise. But to those choice friends of his in Philippi he wanted to impart a deeper, holier truth, viz., that the life of faith on the Son of God was a purer life,

and one more beautiful in God's sight, and more honouring to His Name, than a life of perfect law-keeping would be, if this were attainable by man. He declares that for his own part, if he could present himself before God as one who might challenge his Maker to convict him of legal transgression, he would abjure such an attitude, and would rather choose to appear as one to whom God was pleased to reckon faith in Jesus Christ for righteousness.<sup>1</sup>

This estimate of legal righteousness is not peculiar to one epistle but is given at least as clearly in Gal. iii. 21: "If there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law." Here there is no doubt an implied acknowledgment that the law failed to secure a thorough obedience to its own mandates, but the thought is much profounder. It is not only an assertion of failure, but an exposure of the secret of failure. The impotence of law lies in its total inability to give the life out of which righteousness proceeds. It cannot regenerate, it cannot create a clean heart or renew a right spirit, and without this, mere outward correctness of behaviour is of little worth, and is not far removed from hypocrisy. Conduct regulated by precept is not the highest conduct. Obedience rendered to law as law lacks the ethical quality of spontaneity, and can never rise above the moral level of its source in the spirit of servitude. With such obedience no father can be satisfied, and even at its best it must be less lovely in His eyes than the most rudimentary efforts to please

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 40.

Him which spring freely and with no thought of obligation from a heart which trustfully and lovingly responds to His love.

Before comparing Paul's doctrine with that of his Master it may be interesting and not uninteresting to observe how his estimate of legal righteousness as ethically poor has been reproduced in the terms of modern philosophy by Mr. Herbert Spencer. It cannot be admitted that this writer has given a scientific account of the transmutation of the base metal of egoism into the fine gold of altruism, but in his attempt to achieve this miracle he has rendered homage to the Pauline principle that the most perfect conceivable obedience to law, as such, is not worthy to be compared with an uncalculating course of conduct which springs spontaneously from purified moral sentiments. He looks forward to a time when "that element in the moral consciousness which is expressed by the word obligation will disappear." Consciously, or unconsciously, Mr. Spencer adopts Paul's account of the function of law in the evolution of an enlightened sense of duty. As man "passes into the social state there arises the need for sundry additional subordinations of lower to higher," and this need is met by "restraints caused by mental representations of extrinsic effects in the shape of political, religious and social penalties." I have no occasion here to criticise the defects of Mr. Spencer's ultimate ideal of human conduct or his endeavour to account for the phenomena of moral consciousness

without recognising the validity of man's sense of accountability to One Higher than himself. My sole object is to point out to some with whom it may have weight that Mr. Spencer, from his scientific viewpoint, agrees with Paul in the need for legal discipline as one stage of moral education, and also in the opinion that this need is transitory and altogether ceases when men have learned to do what is right freely and from an inward impulse. The great difference between the ancient Christian teacher and the modern agnostic lies in the fact that the latter puts Christianity and Judaism on the same level as systems of external "compulsion," whereas Paul wanted to get rid of Judaism, because it was a system of compulsion, in favour of Christianity because it is not. The glory of the gospel is that it proposes to place men in a position where they may lay aside all self-regarding fears and every servile feeling of obligation, and, while releasing them from bondage to law, provides them with the purest possible motive to do right by inspiring them with faith in the love of God. The doctrine of justification by faith, as taught in the New Testament, reveals the only imaginable gate by which men, as we know them today, can enter upon a path of life which leads to absolute ethical purity, *i.e.*, a life from which selfishness has been utterly purged. That no Christian life is thus suddenly perfected is clear, but until a man has been delivered from the fear of condemnation, his efforts after righteousness must be tainted with the passion of self-salvation; and all his

conduct remains on the low level of prudential scrupulosity. The only secret of moral perfection is love. If Mr. Spencer's scheme of automatic evolution were to be accomplished, so that without any external compulsion or conscious self-compulsion "the moral sentiments will guide men just as spontaneously and adequately as now do the sensations," the resultant manhood would have no ethical quality, unless by "moral sentiments," we are permitted to understand that the love of others is intended. Given this meaning, Mr. Spencer's ideal becomes one with Paul's, though the "scientific basis" of morals supplied by agnostic philosophy has no more power to shed abroad such love in our hearts than brilliant moonlight can give warmth to a frozen sea. Paul's contempt for the righteousness which is of the law ought to command the sympathy of all who admire Mr. Spencer, and might well lead them to re-study the gospel as an historical factor in the past evolution of moral consciousness, and a still unexhausted power for the ethical improvement of the race. In any case the teachings of this great thinker are a witness that Paul was right in his contention that the Jewish law was, from its very nature, incapable of producing the highest type of character, even if it could succeed in getting its commands obeyed.<sup>1</sup>

At this point we may not unwisely ask whether Paul's idea of the righteousness of faith was originated by himself, or whether he derived it from Christ.

<sup>1</sup> The Data of Ethics, Chap. vii. § 64.



Much has been said about Paul as the author of a theology of which our Lord knew nothing, and we are invited to go back to the simplicity of Christ as an escape from Pauline dogmatism. An appeal from the servant to the master is never unwise, and in this instance we shall find that the ideas which Paul was obliged to express in a controversial form are identical with those which charm us in the life and teachings of our Lord.

Looking first at the life, we can scarcely fail to see that all we venerate in "Jesus Christ the righteous," illustrates and confirms what has been said. What is it which renders Christ the "altogether lovely"? Is it scrupulosity? Is it a rigorous observance of statutes? Is it the precision and correctness of one who is perpetually setting a code of law before His mind and fashioning His conduct thereby? Can we compare Christ to a musician who places upon a stand the score of a sonata written by some one else, and then strikes corresponding notes upon an instrument? On the contrary, the righteousness of Christ may be likened to the work of a musician of the highest genius, who violates no law of harmony, but is conscious of no constraint as he pours out strains of unpremeditated beauty, and produces that which others will delight to reproduce for ages. To use another image: we may describe Christ's visible righteousness as the natural radiance of a spirit which is in itself the precious jewel which God treasures, though He alone can see it as it is. We see in Him the free working of a Son who has no

fear of doing wrong, because He knows and loves the Father's perfect will, and lives at liberty because He has no adverse aims or purposes to be restrained. Christ's righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees, not because He was a more conscientious servant, but because He was a Son. He thus teaches us that Sonship is the highest righteousness the Infinite Father can discern in man. In the perfect Son it stands revealed in unsurpassable glory, undimmed by the faintest shadow of doubt, unblemished by the slightest wavering of purpose to bear and do the Father's will.

Neither in Abraham nor in Paul, nor in any son of man except Jesus, can God see Sonship in perfection; but what He cannot see in perfect maturity He may see in its infancy, and even to one who is spiritually a new born babe He can truly say, "My Son." Wherever He can see the birth of filial trust, He sees that which is intrinsically right, and which contains in itself the promise and germ of all righteousness. He sees a spirit which, fed and disciplined by Himself, will grow up into the likeness and stature of a mature man in Christ Jesus.

If we turn now from the contemplation of the perfect Son of Man to observe His attitude towards faulty men and women, and to hear the words in which He revealed the Father's mind concerning them, we shall find in these an adequate source for all that is essential in Paul's doctrine.

The Pauline conception of imputed righteousness

or justification pervades the gospel narratives and reports, but we can only glance at a few significant utterances. The two views of righteousness which Paul discussed are contrasted in the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Christ did not charge the latter with hypocrisy or insinuate that he lied to God about his virtues. The man's fault lay too deep for any criticism of his conduct to be of consequence. Christ leaves us free to regard him as like Paul, blameless, "as touching the righteousness which is in the law." Indeed, the force of the contrast between the two men delineated lies in the hypothetical concession that the Pharisee is one of those who "need no repentance." Our Lord does not dispute his pretensions or insinuate insincerity, but taking him at his own estimate denies that God accounted him righteous. His works may have been all that he claimed and even better, but he was not thereby justified before God. On the other hand Christ did not defend the publican. He did not suggest that he was morbidly conscientious in confessing himself a sinner. But this man "went down to his house justified," *i.e.*, God accounted him righteous, rather than the other, and did not impute to him his iniquities.

The same principle is embodied in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father saw, and all sympathetic readers can see, the promise and potency of a finer filial life in the self-condemned vagrant, who came confessing his unworthiness to be called a son, yet, with beautiful inconsistency and unconscious,

but unquestioning faith, said: "*Father*, I have sinned," than can be seen in the outwardly correct behaviour of the older brother, whose righteousness, tested by the law of commandments, was blameless." Jesus represents the elder brother as saying with sincerity and with a boldness of indignant assertion which feared no accusing retort, "I never transgressed a commandment of thine." The picture drawn is not that of a hollow pretender or even a self-deceiver. For the sake of conveying a greater lesson than could otherwise be taught, Christ refrains from any hint that this self-satisfied law-keeper was less than he claimed to be. Thus conceding hypothetically all that the most devout and austere Pharisee ever professed, our Lord reveals the worthlessness of such "a righteousness which is of the law," and lays bare for judgment the unfilial spirit which lurked beneath its vaunted perfection.

In His picture of the younger son our Lord sets before us the quality which God can see and approve in the heart of one who has been a great sinner—the quality which makes it congruous with righteousness for the returned prodigal to receive the paternal kiss of peace, to have a ring placed upon his finger, to be arrayed in the best robe, and to be rejoiced over as one alive from the dead. Christ does not extenuate the prodigal's guilt in leaving home or in living dissolutely in the far country. But we see that, coming to his father just as he was, he was abundantly pardoned. Nor was pardon all. The father did not stipulate for future obedience, nor did

he throw open his door conditionally, or with a threat of expulsion if foreign vices were renewed. He did not prescribe a period of probation and thus wait to see how the returned vagrant would behave. At once his grace abounded with faith and love, and without a word or thought of any future dissolution of the bond, he gave him welcome as a son. The wayward son might subsequently fail at times and might come short in duty. Possibly he might forget sometimes the greatness of the grace he had received; but he would remain a son, and the father would never be so unjust as to look upon an occasional blemish or defect as a true index to the inner man of the heart. We cannot read the parable without knowing that from the moment of that kiss which sealed the restoration of sonship, the father ceased to remember his contrite son's transgressions against him. From that hour he ceased to impute or reckon them to his son as faults of which he must still be held guilty and for which he must remain under condemnation. There was no adjourned upbraiding, no half-hearted or conditional reinstatement in the forfeited relationship and status of a son; and we are left to assume that out of this trustful and affectionate reunion an ever-growing harmony of thought and action would ensue.

These two parables perfectly accord with all Christ said, and with His language and attitude to sinful men and women. Faith always received His approbation, and none who trusted in Him were sent away. In other words, He never failed to acknow-

ledge faith as a deeper, truer and more fruitful righteousness than could be found in any works done in a spirit of bondage.

Aided by the light which shines into our hearts from Christ we may return to Paul's teachings with a renewed assurance that we shall find them—notwithstanding their polemical character—redolent of the Master's wisdom and love.

It is important at this point to carefully consider the pregnant utterance in Romans iv. 16, "It is of faith, that it may be according to grace, to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed."

These words contain two vital truths which are often overlooked.

1. That faith is the only conceivable channel through which the sanctifying, ennobling and joy-giving riches of God's goodness can be conveyed into man's nature. Paul here, as everywhere, regards God's grace as the primal source of all blessings, but points out that God can only give effect to his spontaneous liberality through human faith. Giving and receiving are correlative and cannot be disjoined. Without a receiver there can be no transmission of a gift, nor can the giver enjoy the highest blessedness which love can know. The love I do not trust is as no love to me. The spiritual gifts and inspiring truths which, being imbibed, would come to the soul as rain and dew and sunshine to the earth, are as non-existent to the unbeliever. Forgiveness may be ready; God may be waiting to be gracious; He may be stretching forth His hands for days and years,

but only faith can take His favour as a little child receives a gift.

It is a popular fallacy that faith is an arbitrary condition of salvation imposed by God, but which might be dispensed with or exchanged for something else. But there is no substitute for faith. Without faith no social intercourse is possible, and personal beings stand apart, isolated, hostile, suspicious, and all commerce of the affections is arrested. Not because God would impose a needless condition of salvation, but because He desires to make no condition, to withhold no good thing, because to Him it is more blessed to give than to receive, or to retain, He freely offers all that man can need. Because He wills to give liberally, and without upbraiding, He seeks to awaken our receptive trust. It is therefore "of faith that it may be according to grace."

2. These words contain the truth that when God reckons faith for righteousness He is not merely doling out measured deserts. He is dealing justly, but he is dealing bountifully. He is giving exceeding abundantly above all that could be claimed at law. He is, as we have seen in the ways and words of Christ, judging truly. Indeed He is judging according to a higher spirit of equity than He would display if He took cognisance only of man's outward conformity, or nonconformity, to the mandates of a legal code.

There is a profound sense, moreover, in which by requiring faith God is asking what to unaided manhood is impossible, more utterly and hopelessly im-

possible than even a perfect legal obedience. In counting faith for righteousness God is sealing with His own approval that of which He Himself is the author, and that which has cost Him more for its production, than did the creation of a million worlds.

This thought exposes the baselessness of the charge that if God reckoned faith for righteousness it would be conceding to man a ground of glorying, and would exalt faith into a work of merit. The man whose faith has been elicited by the uplifted Son of Man will never be so insensate as to plume himself upon it as a virtue of his own. If faith were self-originated, and self-sustained; if it were an independent product of effort or volition; if it could exist apart from the revelation of God, which draws it forth, confirms and verifies its content and continually enriches it with knowledge—then faith might be called a human achievement. But inasmuch as Christian faith has been begotten and is kept alive by the crucified Son of God, all ground of boasting is abolished. When a royal banquet has been prepared, and many people have been bidden, only those who respond aright can sit down at the table; and even when thus seated none can enjoy the feast without actually eating and drinking what is set before them. Their coming to the feast, and their hearty appreciation of it, will give pleasure to their host, while a refusal to come would be an insult, and would necessarily exclude from the king's circle of friends. But in saying this do



we detract from the king's gracious hospitality? Was it ever known that guests thanked themselves for eating, instead of thanking the host who lavished wealth upon their entertainment? Nothing so preposterous ever entered into a man's brain except to illustrate an analogous absurdity. Faith is man's response to God's bidding in the gospel. It is man's taking and eating of the Great Supper which He has spread for His enemies, as symbolised in the eucharistic meal. He that believeth not excludes himself, partaketh not and is condemned; but they who believe and take what God so freely gives will never fail to magnify the Lord, who at so great a cost has spread a table in the wilderness for souls that were ready to perish.<sup>1</sup>

We now approach a point where two apparently discordant thoughts meet and harmonise. We have found that in justifying the believer God is acting as a Judge, and is delivering a fiat which takes effect upon what in analogical terms can best be spoken of as his legal status. We have also found that He is not judging the man by a legal code, and that in reckoning his faith to him for righteousness, He is bestowing a grace, and not discharging a debt. How, then, do these thoughts combine? How can the forensic term "justify" contain within itself or be harmonised with the idea of grace, which seems rather to describe the ways of a Father than those of a Judge?

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 41.

The clue to a clear reply must be found in the fact that we are now watching the transition from one dispensation to another. Paul is telling us, or rather we hear him telling the Jews, how men may pass from servitude to sonship, from legal bondage to the glorious liberty of the Sons of God ; and it needs but little reflection to perceive that he can only exhibit such a process by using terms which indicate a rational, and above all, a righteous nexus between the old and the new relations.

I have no wish to restrict the application of Paul's words to the transitional period in which he wrote ; nor can it be allowed that his doctrine of justification is devoid of significance except for Jews, and in relation to their national law. On the contrary, I hold that it contains a truth of vital import for all ages and all peoples. But the particular form in which Paul wrote was evidently determined by the needs of the great crisis in which he was the chief actor. It is a striking fact which any reader can verify for himself, that Paul never states his gospel in forensic terms, except in controversial passages where he is dealing with Jewish scruples. He wrote to repel slanderous and malicious accusations, but he was far more concerned to relieve the consciences of men who saw nothing but moral chaos, where he himself saw the emergence of a new heaven and a new earth. Whatever, therefore, may be the value of his teaching for the modern world, we can only appreciate it when interpreted in the first instance as addressed to men who knew the law, and were

dominated by a conviction of its eternal sufficiency to express the relations between God and man.

In order to follow the movements of Paul's thought, we must clear our minds of the delusive assumption that there is a necessary incompatibility between fatherhood and judicial or kingly relations. Volumes, we might say libraries, have been written on the question whether sovereignty or fatherhood should furnish the basal truth or ruling idea of Christian theology, but the issue thus raised is misleading, for there is no necessary antagonism between these terms, and our idea of God is one-sided and partial, unless we unite them in our thoughts.

That their unification is simple, and unconsciously made, even by the keenest disputants, is evidenced by the opening sentences of the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth." Here Christ has exquisitely interfused the idea of a Heavenly Father with the reverence due to His sovereignty, and the submission due to His will. Even on earth we see the harmony of the several relative titles which we transfer analogically to God. In a royal family the children call the king their father, because their father happens to be the king. These royal children are subjects owing fealty to the king, and are liable to be judged by him, or by his magisterial representatives, if they violate the laws of his realm. Since this combination of relations subsists between men, much more

must it be possible, and indeed actual, between men and God. He is the One King who has created His own Kingdom, and sees no subjects who are not also His offspring. God is a word which includes all the relations with the universe which we can strive to express by multiplied imagery, but the useful and inevitable breaking up and partition of functions in our human types and emblems must not mislead us into the absurdity of supposing that these functions are conflictive or separable in God, so that when He acts as a King, or as a Judge, He is not acting as a Father. The term Father expresses the most radical conception of God as related to us, and it is the special name by which He is declared to us by Christ. But in calling Him "Our Father" we need to remember that He is not like an earthly father whose authority is limited or terminable. No other authorities set bounds to His discretion. No one else has either the power or the right to protect His children against undue severity, or to put constraint upon Him to care for their support, their education, and their health. No one else has a prior right to claim their services for reasons which override the claims of family and home. God is the blessed and only Potentate in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways. He is the King Eternal, yet we are His offspring, and we never know our duty, our privileges, our dignity, our safety, our possibilities of glory, until we are emboldened to regard ourselves as the King's sons, and trustfully look up, awed but

undismayed by His glory, and say to Him, "Our Father."

When we have accomplished in thought this unification of attributes and functions, and have familiarised our minds with it, we see how inadequate our analogical terms are, and how fallacious it would be to mentally divide the Godhead into separate departments and offices which involve different principles in the treatment of men. We see that the strict separation of functions which is found necessary in distributing the duties of government among finite and fallible beings becomes impossible in regard to Him who is the fountain of all authority, and is the same in spirit and purpose while manifesting Himself by different methods and under different aspects. In this way we are prepared to see what Paul strove to show, viz., that there is no variableness in God, even when dispensations are changed, and revelation takes new and higher forms. One changeless heart sought one benignant end, and dealt with men in one gracious manner in the patriarchal and the Mosaic ages, and this heart remains unaltered in the age of Christ. Hence the transition in Paul's day from law to grace, was a change which affected man's conception of his relationship to God, but not a change in God's relationship to man; and the chief work which Paul laboured to accomplish was that of guiding men's thoughts from the contemplation of God as revealed in law, to the contemplation of Him as revealed in the gospel. The "everlasting gospel"

was not the announcement of a change in God : it was a changed and more advanced proclamation of what had always been true, but which could not be made known until the world had been prepared for its reception.

In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul helped his Jewish brethren to see the true nature of the transition they were called upon to accept, by using the analogy of a son, who up to a certain age is under legal obligations to obey his father's commands, and in this respect resembles a bond-servant. This obligation is one which may, of course, be defied, but it is one from which the son cannot liberate himself; it is fixed for him by law, and every breach of it must be condemned and may be punished. Yet this same law-bound person, on attaining a full age, is *legally* set free. By an operation which is strictly legal, he is delivered from the bonds of legal obligation to obey his father's behests.

The analogy of an emancipated son assists us to conceive the harmony of a forensic dismissal from the claims of law with a simultaneous entrance into a state which cannot be defined in legal terms. It shows that underneath the changes thus variously expressed there is a continuity of fundamental relations, a persistent purpose which never varies, and a changeless spirit of love out of which all changes of manifestation proceed.

The analogy thus unifies and enriches our thought of God, because it shows us that even among men

fatherhood does not begin when the son emerges from his legal subjection. The father is always the father, his aims and purposes are the same, and even his law of commandments is designed to fit his child for the day of deliverance from restraint. Even through the years of legal subjection, no good father presses the yoke of compulsion, and no good son obeys in a servile spirit. Where love reigns, legal emancipation makes no alteration in the father's tone and demeanour, or in the son's alacrity in pleasing. The son who has learned obedience does not cease to serve because free. On the contrary, a son's respect for his father's wishes and his eagerness to please, usually increase as years advance, until old age brings weakness to the one and quickens protective zeal in the other. So looking back on former ages, we can see that while law was in force God was paternal, and those who most revered His law were most conscious of liberty. While law reigned grace was not lacking. God was merciful and gracious, and when He smote it was "as a man chasteneth his son" (Deut. viii. 5). He never dealt with men as an austere exactor, and was always "slow to anger" and "ready to forgive." The most religious minds saw and rejoiced in this truth, and if technically they were bond-servants, they felt no chain, but served the Lord with gladness, and had no sorrow in His presence except on account of their own failures and transgressions. Hence the close of the legal dispensation implied no change in God. The Gospel did but reveal more

clearly the King in His beauty of Fatherhood, and it involved no more sudden revolution than the passage from legal infancy to legal manhood brings to an earthly father and son.

One aspect of this analogy calls for special notice, viz., that in the human law of subjection during immaturity, we can all recognise a wise and indispensable provision for the protection and education of the child. In the parental assertion and exercise of authority we can also see a loving desire to train a child in habits of self-control and in the practice of righteousness with a view to an ultimate enjoyment and beneficial use of liberty. So Paul declares that "before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed. So that the law hath been our tutor to bring us to Christ" (Gal. iii. 23, 24). It was at no time a method of government which God adopted for its own sake, but one which He employed as a means of preparation for something better. Faith was revealed later, but the truth which faith apprehends in Christ was always true because God is eternally the same. The Fatherhood of the Lawgiver is set forth in the description of His subject people as "the heir." The heir differed nothing from a bondman in his subjection to one to whom he absolutely belonged, but underlying this resemblance there was the indestructible fact that he was a son and heir. Thus the law was simply the Father's educational method, and the object before His mind was one



which required an abandonment of this method as soon as it had done its tutorial work.

This analogy well portrays the historical transition from Judaism to Christianity for the Jews as a people. It illustrates and proves the naturalness and simplicity of a change from one form of obligation to another, but it was not adapted or intended to dispose of the whole difficulty felt by Jews in regard to justification. The supreme difficulty which Paul had to grapple with was not merely the passage of an obedient Israel from legal infancy to the free life of mature manhood, but the release of erring, sinful individuals from subjection to a law by which they stood condemned. The emancipation of a son on attaining his majority represents an ideal transition. It allows us to regard the collective people as an obedient son who has come to full age in happy concord with his father, and thus passes into a state for which he has morally and mentally been ripening. Hence, although the analogy greatly helps our thought, it elucidates only some aspects of justification by faith, and requires to be viewed in conjunction with other thoughts.

The analogy of a son legally passing from subjection to liberty shows more clearly than any other that there is nothing impossible, or incongruous, or undesirable in such a transition as the Jews thought monstrous. It shows that God's ideal requirement is not servile correctness of conduct. What he desires to see is a filial spirit which confides in His wisdom and love and seeks to please Him, not because afraid

of banishment and disinheritance in case of failure, but because such an effort is the natural response to His goodness. This same analogy shows us that there is no discordance between the idea of God as Lawgiver and God as Father, because the law was a transient mode of paternal discipline which had for its object the preparation of its subjects for freedom as full grown sons. It brings home to us the truth that what Paul calls the righteousness which is of the law, however perfect of its kind, is inferior in kind to even an imperfect but genuine spirit of sonship.

Fixing these thoughts in our minds, we may without difficulty proceed to link them with the teaching of Christ's parable of the two sons, and with the polemical version of that teaching which Paul gives.

Man's faults and failures cannot alter the Divine ideal, or divert God from His purposes. They may and do necessitate plans and expedients which but for human sin would have been causeless and objectless, but they affect only the road to be traversed, not the destination to be reached. Hence we are assured that God's desire for disobedient, vagrant sons is not a coming back to obedience in the capacity of servants, but a coming back into His home and family—a reunion of heart as sons. If the prodigal could have his humble request conceded and were sent to an outhouse to share the lot of bond-servants, the father's son would still be dead, and the father's love would still be denied its

joy, and this none the less if the young man were to become a model of propriety and diligence as a servant.

We may vary this illustration by supposing that the younger son returned home and took his place, but served his father with the hard, calculating subserviency which is visible in the elder brother. Would this satisfy the father? Would he not tolerate a little less rigour in the outward observance of his commands, rather than miss the light of love in the son's eyes, and the warm clasp and fervent kiss of affection?

When it has been recognised that it would have been a poor and unsatisfactory thing for the scape-grace son to be transformed into the image of his punctilious brother, we are bound to acknowledge that the elder needed to be transformed into a likeness of the younger, not in his life of sin, but in the state of his heart after coming to himself and to his father. For the prodigal and for the precisian alike one thing was needful, and when the self-satisfied lawkeeper went away from his father's door, he betrayed an absence of that filial spirit which had always been lacking.

For him there could be no happiness in the old home, until travelling by a different road he reached the same state of mind as his repentant brother, and found humility to say "Father, I also have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!" With such a confession on his lips he too might be welcomed with delight. The new spirit

thus expressed would be one of sonship and brotherhood, and out of it all righteousness would freely spring, because it is the love which looking Godwards is filial, and looking manward is fraternal, and is in itself the fulfilling of eternal law.

As Christ looked upon the proud self-righteous Pharisees, and upon the sin-stained but penitent men and women standing around, He saw in the one a spectacle over which he wept, and over which the angels of God might rain their tears from Heaven. In the other He saw the beginning of a change which He had come from Heaven to induce and over which the angels of God were rejoicing with songs more joyous and triumphant than hitherto had been heard around the Throne. To see such birth of new hearts where moral decay appeared to mock the thought of remedy, was to see the travail of His soul; it was to see a sight which made the cross welcome, and death a victory.

In sympathy with Christ Paul saw that the gospel was the power of God unto Salvation, and the only power by which Jew or Gentile could be saved, because by it alone could either class be fitted to abide in the Father's house. In his view both were outside and neither could enter except by one door, the door which grace had opened, but through which only faith could pass. He saw that those who believed in Jesus Christ, believed through Him in God. Paul perceived that faith in Christ contains in itself such a view of God as convicts lawkeepers and law breakers alike of sin,

humbles to repentance, intensifies sorrow, encourages confession, inspires submission to whatever chastisement the Father may inflict, and impels the returning rebel to yield himself up unto God as one alive from the dead. Hence he saw that faith in Christ is not only a fit and appropriate response to Divine grace, but that it contains in itself the very essence of that sonship which God has eternally had before Him as the object of creation, the object of all law and discipline, the object of all sacrifice, the costly fruition of Christ's travail, the desired trophy of His conquest by the cross.

Another aspect of earthly fatherhood which may faintly shadow what is meant by counting faith for righteousness. It not infrequently happens that in a large family there is one son who feels himself aggrieved and regards his father with a suspicion which gradually deepens into distrust. When once distrust has gained a lodgment in the mind it finds aliment in abundance, and no matter how the father acts the moody watcher of his ways reads confirmation of his hard misjudgment. Kindness and severity are alike misread, until distrust becomes hostility. But when the father is truly good, and full of loving solicitude, there sometimes comes a day when he sees his alienated son hovering on the verge of ruin, and hastens to save his boy from irretrievable disgrace at a great cost to himself. The sacrifice involved may be of money or of health and almost loss of life—but the sacrifice is freely

made, and the rescued son beholds with amazement the great love which he has been denying. He owns the falsity of his thoughts, and the wickedness of his passion-blinded aversion ; and, seeing the condemning truth of his father's goodness, he is crushed in spirit, filled with shame, and can scarcely endure to meet his father's gaze. But presently he ventures to look up, and seeing tender sympathy and compassion for his anguish and remorse, he gathers strength to say, "Father, I have wronged you, I have wounded and disgraced you. Would to God I had not been so blind, so base, so cruelly unjust. Oh how different would have been my life had I but trusted ! Now I see, but it is too late, and I can hardly dare to ask you to forgive." How then does a good father meet this broken-hearted cry ? Does he not lay his hand upon the bowed head and say "My son, it is enough. I have waited and prayed for this hour. Now that you see what is in my heart all will be well. Your distrust has sorely grieved me, but I can forgive all you have ever done, or said. The one thing which has divided us has been distrust : that is now gone, and I have no fear of future strife. We shall both of us have our infirmities, but I shall know that your heart is right, and you will never doubt my love."

Allowing for inevitable differences, such a reconciliation as this appears to be a true image of Paul's doctrine of imputed righteousness. Thus interpreted there is nothing artificial in his doctrine, nothing

strained, nothing untrue, nothing which savours of legal technicality. The word "justify" is forensic, and the accounting faith for righteousness is on one side a judicial act. It is judicial because it releases from condemnation, but it is something infinitely deeper than forensic analogies can express, because the Judge is our Father pronouncing His satisfaction in the faith His own goodness has begotten. By a true act of judgment therefore, man is granted an exit from the state of condemnation, but by this same act viewed under another aspect he is welcomed into a state of grace in which the terms of law have no place. The deeper reality of this transition belongs to the realm best understood by the analogy of fatherhood, but for all who have transgressed the law, whether written in words, or in the constitution of our moral nature, there is need of some assurance that God will no longer reckon them transgressors. To the Jew this forensic aspect of salvation was supremely important, and it was for him and such Gentiles as he had influenced that Paul's language was originally moulded. But no guilty conscience can enter with joyous freedom into the life of a son, and dare to reckon himself an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ, without the sanction and approval of the great heart-searcher who is the Judge of all the earth. No teaching of the Fatherhood of God which ignores the fact that our Father in Heaven is the King, the Lawgiver and the Judge, can fully satisfy a contrite heart. We need to see that our Salvation proceeds

from Him who is all, and more than all these titles can express ; and that nothing which any one of these great names is intended to reveal is suppressed, or violated, or in the least degree impaired by our deliverance from condemnation.

If I have given a true interpretation of Paul's doctrine, we may expect to find some verification of the fact in the subsequent parts of his epistle, and it is not difficult to say what form such verification must take. We have seen that as a sequel to the proof of universal sin, and the impossibility of justification by law, Paul could only state the manner of man's release from legal condemnation in terms which denote a judicial act. Hence the forensic force of the word *dikaioō* is determined by its relation to the preceding arguments and to the Jewish objections which called them forth. But we have seen that this judicial act of release from condemnation is also an act of grace. The grace is righteous, but for this reason it is the more and not the less worthy to be called grace. If this view be correct, we must expect to find that in discussing the Christian's subsequent life and position before God, Paul will not be content to linger on forensic terms, but will exhibit the filial life which we have identified with faith in Christ. We may expect also that he will take pains to so exhibit the spiritual fruits of this faith, as to prove to his questioners the congruity of his doctrine with the righteousness of God, and with the supremacy of His holy will.



The remainder of the epistle fully answers to this expectation. The fifth chapter opens with a sentence which, particularly in the original, identifies justification by faith with the reckoning of faith for righteousness, and then proceeds to describe the outcome of the great transition we have surveyed. The primary effect of the change is that we are introduced into a state of "peace with God."<sup>1</sup> There is nothing said here about peace as a state of the emotions, but peace with God is declared to be the state into which we enter by faith in Jesus Christ. Having entered into this state, in which God deals with us according to the riches of His own spontaneous goodness, we look forward with hope to a glorious consummation. Thus faith is the basis of an expectation which, being mixed with desire for things not yet seen, becomes a joyful hope, and this again is an animating and sustaining power to the life which must still be lived in the flesh. Thus, with a sudden but perfectly natural transition, Paul declares that we rejoice, not only in the far off prospect of glory, but in the present discipline and trial of our faith (*cf.* James i. 2) not because tribulation is pleasant, but because it works patience, and patience having its perfect work brings experimental proof of that which faith apprehends. This confirmation again works livelier hope,—thus transmuting tribulation into helpful discipline and feeding faith itself from day to-day.

But here an objector may sneer at a life of hope

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 42.

as the pursuit of a lovely mirage, and even believers may at times grow weary and faint in their minds because of hope deferred. Hence Paul meets their need by adding, "and hope putteth not to shame ;" not because we have possession of all we desire, but "because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given us."

Here three points demand special notice. (1) Paul does not speak of any legal claim to a future heritage. Our confidence is not to be built upon any such foundation, but upon the love of God. Judicial release from condemnation is behind, but we are now in the region of grace where legal title deeds can have no place. (2) Paul wisely seeks to divert our thoughts from the subjective conditions of faith, and to turn our eyes to Him who is its author and finisher, because only by beholding Him can faith survive. (3) Paul introduces a thought which he assumes his readers to be familiar with, though not previously presented in this epistle, viz., that the believer in Christ is not a lonely creature clinging to Christ for life, with a clasp which must, under peril of death, be maintained in his own strength. There is, we are reminded, an unseen and voiceless Friend, the promised Paraclete who comes to those who trust in Christ, guiding them into truth, taking the things of Christ which are the things of the Father, and shewing them unto us. Thus quietly the thought is instilled that faith is not only a condition of justification, but a bond of

living intercourse with the Divine Spirit. The Christian life is not only one of prayer and endeavour, but one of personal communion. In this communion God is not only the sought one, but the Seeker ; not only a Hearer but a Speaker ; and thus we are taught to let our hearts go out from self to Him as at all times our very present Help.

Having introduced this mystical yet most practical and realistic truth, Paul hastens to describe its definite effects in personal experience. The Holy Spirit has done, he declares, precisely what Christ said He should do. He has not spoken of Himself, or revealed Himself. He has not announced His own presence ; but He has brought to our hearts a vision of the love objectively revealed in Christ. What then is the love shed abroad in our hearts ? It is the love commended in the Death of Christ. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Surely then He who gave us Christ will give us all things needful to make this great gift effective in our ultimate salvation. If He has conquered our enmity, will He not foster our weak friendship into perfect love ? If He died for us, will He not employ the forces of His risen life to complete His benignant work, and crown His own sacrifice with glory ? Thus Paul feeds faith, hope and love, by uniting his testimony with every believer's experience and with the voiceless witness of the Spirit. Then, having begun by declaring that we have peace with God, he rises to his loftiest note of exultation. We

are not only at peace, not merely reconciled, but God, who but for Christ would have been our fear and dread, has become our delight. "We joy in God." Jesus Christ, who slew our enmity by commending God's love to us while we were yet sinners, so clears our vision, that we see more and more of God's glory, and abound more and more in adoring praise and love. Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the author and completer of salvation, and our part is to see, and hear, and take into our hearts the infinite riches of His grace.

The remaining portion of this chapter has great value, but for our immediate purpose it demands no more than a passing reference as leading to the subject of chapter six. In pursuance of his purpose to declare God's righteousness in dealing with men of all nationalities, Paul points out that the bitter consequences of ancestral sin have flowed like an ever broadening river wherever the race of man has multiplied, but repeats his great principle that where there is no law sin is not imputed. Having thus recognised the most appalling facts of human history, he unfolds the righteous principle that as all have suffered in like manner from one man's fault, a common redemption is provided for all through one man, Jesus Christ. The same law of social fellowship which permits the diffusion of sin and death is being graciously employed for the diffusion of righteousness and life. Thus Christ has been made the source of a new river which is destined to deepen and widen, until at last it heals

the sea of death as prefigured in the vision of Ezekiel.<sup>1</sup>

By a new line of thought Paul has thus brought us back to the contemplation of justification by faith as a blessing offered in the gospel to every creature under heaven. He has stated it without flinching in the face of hostile critics ; now he is logically free and morally bound to entertain their chief objection. He has significantly said that grace is to reign *through righteousness* unto eternal life, but something more than this assertion is required to meet the sinister suggestion :—If you magnify God because of His abounding grace, why not indulge in sin more freely that God may have more ample scope to glorify Himself by its forgiveness ?

Paul's answer has already been foreshadowed in his account of what faith in Christ contains and effects in the experience of the believer, but in the sixth chapter this truth is expanded and illustrated. He points out that the man who has really been united to Christ in the manner symbolised by the baptism of a believer, has thereby entered into a living fellowship with One who died to condemn sin, and to destroy it in our hearts, who also rose again to bring us into a new life of filial service to God. No man who has verily trusted in Christ *as the Redeemer from Sin* can conceivably desire to continue in the state from which he seeks salvation. Thus the believer in the crucified and ascended Christ becomes a new creature. Viewed in relation

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 43.

to his past life, he has died to sin. Viewed in relation to the life he enters upon, he is born again, regenerated by the incorruptible seed of truth contained in the gospel.

Analogical terms fail to fully cover the significance of spiritual facts, and the most contradictory terms are used to represent different aspects of the same great change. As a judicial deliverance from condemnation it is "justification" by faith. As a forsaking of sin it is a death. As an escape from moral decay and restoration to fellowship with God it is a resurrection. As a commencement of filial obedience it is a birth. As a cessation of opposition to God it is reconciliation. As a deliverance from the bonds of iniquity, and from a vain manner of life, effected by God at a great cost, it is redemption. No one of these terms is adequate to express all the truth, and each one, if presented as complete and sufficient becomes untrue, or at any rate implies something false. These terms are not all employed in this same chapter, but we need to recognise the general literary law which governs their usage, because the change which has been spoken of as justification and reconciliation in chapter five is here depicted as a death and a resurrection, a deliverance from bondage, and a free life towards God. In literary and in spiritual harmony with these new terms and aspects of truth, the believer is also admonished to recognise his position, his privileges and his responsibilities. His position is stated in ideal terms, but Paul, ever a preacher, and never a disputant, except for the sake

of his preaching, entreats the Roman Christians to make the realities of life correspond to his doctrinal theory.

In chapter seven Paul reverts to some legal aspects of the great transition. For the special benefit of men who were familiar with the law, he uses the analogy of death as a severance of relations, and a termination of obligations, setting free the wife from her husband and the slave from his master. Under this imagery he enforces a great religious truth. His language is legal, but his thought is ethical, and far removed from forensic quibbles and technicalities. The man who has died to sin in sympathy with the crucified Christ, and is delivered from condemnation, is necessarily dead to the law by which he was formerly bound. The moral change warrants, and the judicial release involves, an end of the relations which can be expressed in terms of law. Thus, the analogy of death is not fanciful, but profoundly true and realistic, and Paul states it without flinching from the anticipated reproach of anarchism. But having stated the case thus he proceeds, in perfect accord with all that has been said, to declare that the object and ultimate effect of this "death" to law is not lawlessness in any evil sense, but a fuller, sweeter, and more ethical obedience, "so that we serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

To Jewish minds this was unpalatable, and, until thoroughly understood, indigestible doctrine. It was foreseen by Paul that they would regard it as a

wild impeachment of their law, as a blunder and a failure. To them it seemed clear that his doctrine meant either that the law of Moses was a mischievous human invention, or else that God was abdicating His throne and relinquishing the duties of moral government. To remove this grave difficulty he first of all scouts the imputation that he is casting scorn upon the law, and then explains what the law could do, and what it could not do ; why it was needful for a time, and was altogether good for its intended purpose, and why it had become necessary for God to let it expire.

The passage which follows is a profound and convincing elucidation of the truth, that a mere knowledge of duty fails to produce right conduct, so that the higher and more refined the law by which conscience is enlightened, the more difficult obedience becomes, and the more intense is the consciousness of sin. Even in well-meaning men law produces a strife between conscience and inclination. The most sincere striver after righteousness becomes the most painfully aware of insurrection in his nature, and presently is tempted to renounce his futile endeavours after perfection, and to subside into a demoralising state of despair. The loftier his ideals, and the more fervent his aspirations the more self-condemnatory he becomes, and the more conscious of impotence to carry out his intents and purposes in daily life. The cry of the man who knows his duty towards God, and ignominiously fails to fulfil it, is a cry to which the law has, and from its



very nature can have, no response. Paul knew this cry to be the most pathetic which has ever risen up to heaven, and he agonised to make his countrymen see that it was righteous for God to make some reply to it, and also that this reply had been made by Jesus Christ.

The words "there is therefore now no condemnation" (viii. 1), are a repetition in a negative form of the opening thought of chapter five—"Therefore being justified by faith." They mark indeed a resumption of the subject there dealt with, and this chapter fills in the outline sketch of a believer's life and experience given in v. 1-11. It is manifestly designed to direct the believer's thoughts to the glorious designs of God, and the living help of His spirit, and so to foster that hope which is a saving force from the despair to which men are reduced by the threatenings of law. But before enlarging on the believer's encouragements, Paul is careful to guard his doctrine of justification by faith against something worse than hostile attacks, viz., a misuse of it by self-complaisant hypocrites who might easily wrest it to their own destruction.

His power to do this is marked by a striking difference of expression between viii. 1., and v. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them *that are in Christ Jesus.*" The persons here referred to are those "justified by faith," but the different expression gathers up the significance of the intermediate discussions, which have enriched the idea of faith in Christ by showing that it carries in itself

a principle of living fellowship with Him who condemned sin in the flesh. It carries in itself a participation in Christ's abhorrence of sin, and His filial devotion to the will of the Father. It constitutes or effects such a change of attitude, disposition and purpose as amounts to nothing less than a death to sin, and a resurrection, or rebirth, to godliness. Hence Paul gathers up the fulness of meaning in his many analogical terms, and gives expression to his enlarged, enriched and glorified conception of the life of faith by saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

If, following the directive finger-word "therefore" we glance backwards and ask, "Why is there no condemnation to these persons?" we may verify the road traversed by our exposition. The declaration does not mean that there is no sin in believers, for Paul has just said that the man who rejoices in Christ as the instrument of his deliverance from evil, still with his flesh fails to do all the good he would, and thus in some measure serves "the law of sin." Nor does it mean that conduct which in others would be punished is condoned in believers, for the Apostle has previously warned those who have "been baptized into Christ" that if they yield themselves up to serve sin they will earn its wages and die, and he instantly repeats this solemn warning, "if ye live after the flesh ye must die." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." Thus, like John, he teaches that "if we say we have no sin in us we deceive ourselves, and make

God a liar," but if we walk in the light the sins of infirmity which may still beset us will not cut us off from fellowship with Him who is light. He agrees also with James that a professed faith which bears no fruit in conduct is a vain profession. (James ii. 26.) Dismissing fatal, soul-destroying notions and supplying a practical test of vital union with Christ, we thus learn the several reasons why there is no condemnation to those truly in Christ : (1) because with their minds they serve the law of God, though no more subject to the letter of statutes ; (2) because abiding in Him who is the true Vine, they as branches are nourished by His word and by His Spirit of filial obedience to God ; (3) because, although not perfect in the doing of God's will, they are loyal to Him in heart, are ceasing to do evil and learning to do well ; and finally (4) because mystically, but most really one with Him in whose life and death sin was more impressively and solemnly condemned than by any thunderings of law, or by blasting fires of punishment. On these accounts therefore those in Christ can most righteously be numbered with God's children, and receive the same blessing as Abraham, whose faith was reckoned for righteousness.

Throughout this chapter Paul writes to those who are in Christ, yet are still hoping for the consummation of salvation, and still subject to the painful incidents of life in which faith, hope and loyalty are severely tried. He passes out of the polemical arena and meets his Christian brethren with paternal words

of encouragement. He has declared their judicial discharge from law, and now he deals with their temptations and perplexities as children. Never for a moment does he bid them base their confidence on a legal status as the guarantee of security, nor does he bid them look back continually to the reconciling Cross. As reconciled men he bids them look up to the living Christ as the one who having died for them once lives for ever as their Friend and Advocate in Heaven, who also sends His promised spirit to be His advocate with them and their ever present friend and guide and helper on earth. God's love in Christ ; God's purpose to ultimately bring all who through Christ love and trust Himself into the likeness of the perfect Son ; God's overruling providence in making all things (and particularly those which seem to be against us) work together for our good ; God's unwearied patience in bringing the creation itself into final harmony with the yearnings and satisfaction of His redeemed sons ; these are the sublime thoughts which Paul presents for the support of the faith and hope which were begotten by the cross, and which have their sacred seal and pledge of victory in the blood which there was shed. The law, though educationally good, has now no function, except that of explanation and mental guidance for those who are living as joint heirs with Christ, and are plied by the spirit with such holy motives and such inspiring anticipations. The love which has reached us through the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ is a love which will freely give all things to those

who receive it into their hearts by faith. The man in whom Christ has begotten a faith through which the fulness of God may flow is potentially possessed of all things needful to sustain the life of sonship and to bring him at last into conformity with Jesus Christ. The memory of all that God has done through Jesus Christ who died is an everlasting pledge that God will not leave His work undone or turn aside from His eternal purpose. Thus the faith which begins with a trembling clasp of the nail-pierced hand stretched forth in reconciling grace, increases in power and fills itself with the riches of God's goodness until the contrite one, who scarcely dared to take the pardon of his sins, is emboldened to declare that neither life nor death, nor any adverse forces in the universe, will ever be able to separate him from the love of God, which has sought and found and clasped him in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In chapters ix, x, and xi, Paul discusses the righteousness of God in dealing with all nations in a manner which the Jews considered would constitute a violation of His covenant with themselves. The main force of his argument is directed to prove that God was righteously free to shew mercy to all nations, and free to exercise judgment upon Israel, if, like Pharaoh, their old oppressor, the men of Israel hardened their hearts and fought against the redemption of the Gentiles. In grieved anticipation of an impending dispersion, Paul renewed the warning

which Jeremiah had learned in the potter's house. Israelites were flattering themselves that their privileges were secured by an unconditional election, and it was necessary to repeat the lesson that there was nothing in the terms of their election to restrict God's liberty to break them in pieces as a marred vessel is shattered by a potter, and nothing to prevent Him from making for Himself a new vessel of clay, a new and more perfect and much vaster kingdom to be gathered out of all nations and kindreds of the earth.

This section of the epistle closes with a powerful appeal to the Gentiles to regard Israel with affectionate sympathy rather than with anger or scorn. They are reminded that alike in her election and rejection she had been impressed by God into the service of mankind. In calling her He had been governed by no partiality or personal preference, and in casting her away He was acting for the good of mankind at large. Paul also declares his conviction that eventually Israel will turn to the Lord, and so crown her own destiny, and fulfil her ministry to the world by bearing an overwhelming witness to Christ, a witness which would issue in a world wide conversion.

We saw in the opening of the epistle that Paul strove to bring all men—Jews and Gentiles alike—to confess the righteousness of God in charging them with actual sin. Now, reviewing all his work in convincing men of sin and judgment, Paul exultantly proclaims that all God's ways have had universal mercy as their aim and object. All God's

judgments and severities of discipline have been the outcome of His love, and have been wisely chosen for the furtherance of designs in which His own glory and man's deliverance from evil have coalesced. Punishment has never been His final aim, and if He has shut up all unto disobedience, it has been in order that He may have mercy upon all.

At this point the Apostle passes from Polemics to Ethics, from logical reasonings for the establishment of doctrine to fervent persuasions and sagacious admonitions for the building up of Christian character on the firm foundation of faith in the righteous mercy of God. "Therefore," he pleads—and this word introduces what he regards as the only logical conclusion of his reasonings—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" thus unfolded to your view, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

It does not fall within the scope of this study to examine in detail the instructions which follow this appeal for the consecration to God. The supremely important point demanding our attention lies in the connection which is presupposed between the noblest ideal of human conduct and the great truths of the gospel revelation.

To appreciate this connection, we need to observe

the sublime audacity of the demands thus introduced. Reading through the chapter, it becomes evident that duties are called for which exceed the powers of unaided human nature, as certainly as fig-bearing transcends the power of thistles and the bringing forth of grapes is impossible to briars. We are called upon not merely for kindly and generous actions, but for affections which we do not naturally feel, for sacrifices of inclination which we flinch from as unreasonable and impossible. We are not only to be patient in tribulation, as the Stoics taught; but in spite of all the disappointments and rebuffs by which the world scatters bright illusions, and seems to make a mock of expectation; and in spite of the inevitable failure of powers and darkening of earthly prospects, we are to rejoice in hope. Through years in which heaven is silent, and requests are often without visible response, we are to continue steadfastly in prayer. When persecuted, we are to bless those who hate and harass us. When sad at heart and craving sympathy, we are not to burden others with our grief, but to enhance the joy of those who rejoice by rejoicing with them. When we are glad, we are not to expect the sorrowful to come and rejoice with us, but must mourn with those who weep. Thus we are exhorted to display heroic self-forgetfulness, to carry our own burdens without asking help of any except God, and in addition we are to undertake the superhuman task of bearing the burdens of our fellow men! To crown all, while



resisting the depressing and apparently overwhelming forces of evil in the world, we are called upon not merely to save ourselves from being vanquished, but are required to achieve a decisive victory—"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

These claims on men who have been "justified by faith" are an evidence that in Paul's estimation there was something very real in God's judgment of the righteousness of faith. It proves that God expects to gather from every believer the fruits of a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of Jewish Pharisees and Gentile Stoics. Neither these nor any other moralists ever dreamed of exacting such fruit from the poor tree of human nature. All men can recognise the nobility and beauty of such an ideal of conduct and spirit, but every man is ready to confess: It is ideal; it is Divine, not human; it is high, I cannot attain unto it!

Returning to the verses which introduced these exalted admonitions, we are confronted with what appears to be a more exorbitant demand than any regulative precept, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Fickle people find no difficulty in changing their minds, *i.e.*, in allowing their thoughts and purposes to veer round with every gust of wind that blows. But who can change those secret thoughts and wishes, and that disposition of the heart, which constitute the man himself? He may hate and curse himself for infatuated folly, or for outbursts of passion; and in hours of self-discovery he may

stand aghast at the spectacle uncovered—the naked soul from which the draperies of self-complacency have been torn. But the horrible thing is that, however hideous he finds himself to be, he remains what he is, and is incapable of self-regeneration. He may repress many self-betraying impulses. He may assume a mask of fair behaviour, and cultivate a smile which seldom changes to a frown, or to the curves of scorn ; but behind the smile the man who does not smile is there. It were easier by direct volition to add a cubit to the stature, or to turn the hair black or white, than for a man to transform himself. He may, at any rate for a time, fashion himself according to any desired pattern so as to be mistaken for “an angel of light.” But this will not give him love “without dissimulation,” nor will it fill him with “cheerfulness” when affecting to shew mercy, nor with fervour of spirit in affairs which do not naturally excite his interest. It will not inspire prayer, or sympathetic joy or sorrow. It may ape the habits and demeanour of a Christian, but such counterfeited virtue will constitute the most direful and ruinous moral defeat which can happen to a human soul. Paul knew the limits of self-improvement as well as any man who ever lived, and yet in defiance of these limitations he entreats us to be transformed, and to be so truly and inwardly transformed that the whole life of thought, feeling and volition shall please the Great Heart Searcher, and answer hour by hour to His good and acceptable and perfect will !

On what ground, then, did the Apostle venture to make this extraordinary appeal? The answer is clear. He was persuaded that what a man cannot do for himself may yet be done by his use of Divinely furnished means. He was sure that the believer in Christ has access to all the resources of the Divine wisdom, power and grace, and that the mind which freely eats and drinks the truth as it is in Jesus will thereby be renewed day by day.

The most significant peculiarity of these apostolic precepts, when compared with those of any law giver or ethical teacher, is that they thus follow a revelation of regenerative truth, and are associated with exceeding great and precious promises of help, together with simple directions for finding it in every hour of need. Law can promise life to men if they obey its behests, but on no other terms. At best it incites to self-sustained endeavour, and up to the last hour of active life it leaves the striver a prey to fears of failure, for even at his latter end he may transgress, and fling away the crown of many former victories. In such endeavours, even when most successful, there must always be an element of self-seeking which detracts from their ethical purity, and limits their acceptability to Him who looks not only on the outward forms of conduct, but on the motives and intents of the heart. But Christian precepts reverse this order and appeal to us not as strugglers for the right to live, but as being already alive from the dead, already living sons of God, and fellow heirs with Christ. Because

we have received such love, such mercy, and such enfranchisement, we are entreated to devote our living powers to God. In order that our active life in the world may be worthy of its true nature and origin, we are exhorted to keep it well replenished with that heavenly nutriment which is provided for us in that revelation which is not only the seed which begets, but the bread which feeds the sons of God. Without this continual "renewing" of the mind, spiritual life must become attenuated. If we are justified by faith, we must also live by faith on the Son of God, and as faith was elicited by the love which He commended to us as sinners, even so it can be sustained only by continual looking unto Him who has loved us, and by fellowship with His mind and heart.<sup>1</sup>

Before commencing a discussion of Justification by Faith, it was premised that nothing which adds to the value of faith can weaken the conclusion already reached, that its provocation through the Death of Christ was necessary for man's redemption, because indispensable for the awakening of that love which is the fulfilment of Divine law, and the essence of righteousness in God and man. The justice of that statement is amply confirmed by the result of our inquiry. We have found that the faith in God which Christ inspires is itself precious in God's sight, and is reckoned by Him for righteousness prior to the rectification of conduct which is its

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 44.

ultimate effect. But this in no way diminishes the vital necessity of a revelation of God's love. We have seen that while God cannot condone any fault or be finally satisfied with anything less than a perfect conformity to His law of love, this perfect purity of thought, feeling and action is inconceivable except as the spontaneous outcome of a heart which has been delivered from the fear of punishment and the lust of reward. Hence for those who have once sinned, an assured forgiveness and a free bestowal of Sonship with all its security and privileges is the *sine qua non* of ethical perfection. Faith in God, therefore, not only in general as a loving Father, but specifically as able righteously to remit the sins of those who trustfully return to Him, is necessary for man's redemption. The doctrine of Justification is therefore not merely in harmony with our previous conclusions, but it contains within itself a complementary truth. We may go beyond this, and say that Paul's polemical theology is but the vindication of the gospel as it appears in the parables of Christ, in His treatment of contrite sinners, in His manifold declaration of the Father's name, and above all as He illustrates, commends, and inviolably seals His witness to the truth, by His death and resurrection from the grave.

Stripped of all the technicalities which were forced upon him by the objections he encountered, Paul's idea of religion is therefore sublimely simple. He regards it as one and the same thing in all ages, and throughout all dispensations.

Christianity in its inmost essence is the religion of those primitive men who first exercised faith by calling on the name of the Lord. It is the religion of the Patriarchs who believed God, and by faith, obeyed Him to the point of heroic sacrifice. It is the religion of those ancient law givers who by precept and ceremonial declared God's Name, and taught men that though God cannot be appeased by the insulting sacrifices of the wicked, there is forgiveness with Him for all who hope in His mercy, and so confess their sins, and trustfully conform to His appointed manner of approach. It is the religion of the prophets, who taught men to live through all vicissitudes by faith in God. In all these different forms and stages of development religion is one and the same, because it is the same spiritual activity towards God. Pure religion was always a trustful appeal to Him who exercises righteousness and lovingkindness in the earth; but in Christianity this one permanent religion is enriched by the fruits of discipline and the teachings of experience. It comes to us laden with all the added wealth of truth and heart converting power, which Christ brought into the world, and left as a legacy of reconciling love to be administered by disciples as trustees of the manifold grace of God.

Atonement is an all inclusive word which announces God's part in rendering this religion possible, and potentially triumphant on the earth. It glorifies the cross of Christ as in a pre-eminent and indeed unique sense the power of God unto

salvation ; but it makes that cross the central fact of history, the culmination of Divine activity on man's behalf, the sign which interprets all the ways of God, by revealing the Heart of the Everlasting Father to His ignorant and alienated sons.

### ATONEMENT AND LAW.

The right of any idea to be called Christian must necessarily be judged by its agreement with the ancient documents which are alone in their claim to acquaint us with the life and teachings of Jesus Christ ; and to this Berean test I now commend what I have presented as the Christian Idea of Atonement. But before writing the word "Finis," I propose to ask, How far will this idea endure the further and inevitable test of conformity to the modern scientific conception of Immutable Law ?

It need scarcely be said that no religious doctrine which fails to endure this test can be regarded as credible, but this does not warrant an immediate rejection of every opinion to which objections are urged in the name of science ; for in this name crude theories have been propounded, and many illegitimate inferences have been drawn from verified facts and sound generalisations. Faith in the reign of law is essential to the idea of a Cosmos, and therefore to the idea of God. Apart from a conviction that we are placed in the midst of a vast universe in which order prevails, science and religion become equally impossible ; and no doctrine which demonstrably

violates the principle on which this confidence is built can survive the fiery trial to which all opinions are subjected in our day. Whether we speak in the terms of theology or of natural science, the inviolability of the universal order must therefore be maintained against all superficial suggestions of Divine leniency. Man can, and assuredly does violate the moral law, but the limits of his power are confined within impassable walls of possibility; and having chosen his modes of action, he cannot choose the consequences; nor can God be so feeble a ruler as to disarrange His creation to suit the convenience of a disobedient creature. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Where God reigns law must reign, for God's object is, and must necessarily be, the doing, and not the undoing of His will. It inexorably follows, therefore, that the Immutability of Law is as truly a first principle of religious faith as it is an axiom in modern science.

The strength of Anselmic Theology in all its modified forms has always lain in its supposed maintenance of this principle. But from a scientific standpoint we are told that this Anselmic theory of vicarious punishment is a preposterous device to evade the principle it professedly honours. The idea of satisfying law by transferring punishment from the guilty to the innocent is ridiculed as absurd, and condemned as immoral in thought. It is also declared to be impossible, because the reign of law means the unbroken sequence of cause and



effect, so that man's actions always do, and always must, bring their retribution to the doer himself, and must work out their inexorable consequences for ever. We are admonished also that any attempt to conceal or tone down the terrible significance of this doctrine by tempting men to expect "interrupting mercies" must tend to induce carelessness in conduct, by fostering delusive hopes of reaping a good harvest after sowing bad seed.

In estimating the force of this objection to the doctrine of Atonement by vicarious Penance, it must be observed that Anselmic theologians use the word law in a sense which includes an element which is not in the word as employed by scientific critics. The radical idea of a constant order which cannot be broken is always present, but the Christian theologian never loses sight of God as the author and guardian of this order, and he has always in his mind the thought of a revealed law in which God issued decrees. But the strictly scientific critic knows nothing of Divine words or revealed codes, and he assails the Anselmic scheme of legal satisfaction by denying that the author of Nature (if there be one) can imaginably be content with a mere technical and nominal fulfilment of spoken words, when this involves a real breach of the order which binds the universe together. He also points to the phenomena of the world as ample proof that human conduct always does entail its natural consequences without any discoverable breach of continuity.

I have no interest in pursuing the controversy as

between the parties thus defined. The discussion in this form has been forestalled by the evidence adduced to prove that the scriptures do not attribute to God any unconditional decree of punishment, and that they know nothing of any such expedient as the Penal Theory propounds in the name of law. We may, however, freely admit that the Anselmic theory of Atonement is fatally smitten by scientific and ethical criticism. Its supposed satisfaction of law amounts to nothing more than a colourable pretext for an introduction of mercy into the Divine government.

But while we thus repudiate responsibility for a nominal but unreal maintenance of law, we expose a larger front to the attack of those who plead that Forgiveness is a breach of order. On Biblical grounds we have made ample room for forgiveness as an integral part of the moral order over which God presides. We have now to ask whether this theological doctrine of scripture is compatible with a scientific view of the world.

At the outset I will frankly say that if forgiveness does really constitute a violation of natural order and does necessarily involve an arbitrary arrest of those consequences which flow from transgressions of the moral law, it cannot rationally be attributed to the Author of Nature. If anything be clear in our reading of nature it is that she is no respecter of persons or of moral qualities. The sun rises and the rain falls on the evil and the good. Fire burns the martyr's flesh, as surely as it consumes the offal of a

city. Winds and floods destroy the property of saints and sinners with equal ruthlessness, and pestilence sweeps away the righteous and the unrighteous without a sign of compunction. If any moral design can be discovered in the indiscriminating processes of nature, it is that of subjecting man to the operation of general laws as conducive to his training in virtue and wisdom, and therefore better for him than any incalculable and bewildering adaptations of environment to fickle subjective conditions. To imagine that God interferes with the operation of general laws out of pity for repentant transgressors is to contradict the silent witness of the Cosmos to His Divine unchangeableness.

But by making this unreserved admission we in no degree weaken the ground of belief in forgiveness, because forgiveness does not imply an arbitrary arrest of the natural consequences of transgression, and the two things can only be identified by a confusion of thought. In its ultimate issues forgiveness may, and the Christian faith includes a belief that it will bring about a full deliverance from all injurious effects of disobedience, but to do this it works within the realm of universal order, and in ways which are in no sense of the word violations of natural law.

That this is not impossible may easily be proved. The reign of natural law does not import the perpetual and unchecked persistence of any given line of sequences. In Physics a moving body will

continue to move in the same direction unless stopped, or deflected by some resisting force; but science has never contemplated as probable, or possible, the endless passage of a body through space in an infinite straight line. Similarly in the higher region of morals, a man's conduct necessarily affects his own character and environment, and will continue to work out its natural consequences until, or unless, other causes operate to arrest or modify these effects. Hence we may conclude that although sin naturally and necessarily produces ill effects on the evil-doer, and on his neighbours and descendants; and although each sin must continue thus to operate unless modified or overcome by other causes; yet this by no means excludes the possibility of remedial discipline, nor does it discredit the idea of counteracting forces of goodness. The inexorable regularity and persistence of causation in the physical realm leaves room for medicine and surgery, and for the beneficial influence of prolonged rest and change of climate. So in the moral realm there is obviously room for the curative forces of chastisement, the sobering effects of painful consequences witnessed or experienced, the gentler touch of kindly persuasion, the trenchant power of rebuke, the constraint of sympathy and love.

Looking at familiar facts we see all around us striking illustrations of these principles. Law reigns in every family, and no member of it can evade or escape its grasp, so that in every home sin produces ill effects. But in a well-ordered family

the sin of a child is not allowed to bring forth its natural crop of hatred, distrust and disorder, without strenuous endeavours to counteract the evil. A wise father will use his utmost powers of thought in devising means to prevent the offender's deterioration, and to strengthen the power of resistance to evil in other inmates of the home. In such a family, correction, amendment and ennoblement of character are not unknown or rare phenomena. The tendency of sin is to spread like a contagious disease, but there are such things as moral disinfectants, and laws of health are known which skill and love can use for the preservation of virtue in the midst of manifold temptations.

Among the forces thus employed forgiveness has a most important and absolutely indispensable place. A merciless parent inevitably drives his children to despair. Among faulty creatures the possibility of retrieving errors and failures, and the hope of restoration to favour after offences have been committed, is essential to moral progress. Hence in refined social life mercy has a high place among the virtues, and implacableness is condemned as the mark of a bad disposition. Every wise man knows that capricious, unconditional forgiveness is demoralising, but the duty and the moral limits of forgiveness can be stated in definite terms, and, as previously urged, its influence, when dispensed in accordance with the law of Christ, is wholly favourable to righteousness.

In considering the relation of forgiveness to the

natural consequences of sin it is important to observe that, although the physical and moral realms are quite distinct, and each is under the dominion of its own laws, yet they are not separable, and each is powerfully affected by the other. Moral conduct includes bodily action, and physical health is in no small measure dependent on the supremacy of good or evil principles. A moral change for the better often removes an active cause of physical deterioration, while a change for the worse begins or aggravates mischief, so that what the theologian calls sin is, in many of its forms, recognised by physicians as a certain cause of decay. On the other hand, a physical experience often acts on the moral nature, and the bodily effects of transgression not infrequently serve to point the preacher's appeal to conscience, and become a voice from God, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" In the light of these facts we are obliged to conclude that if the diseases which are wasting the strength of many nations are to be exterminated, the religious teacher must work hand in hand with the physician; because apart from the operation of moral forces to restrain wickedness, and to direct, and enable self control, the physical consequences of sin which are now so appalling, and so threatening to the race, will never be overcome.

Within certain limits the justice of this contention will be universally acknowledged, but it will be justly pleaded that it does not constitute a complete solution of the problem. It makes room for moral

causes to be recognised as remedial agents, even in the physical realm : and it points a little hopefully towards a gradual amelioration of man's condition in spite of tendencies which of themselves are portentous of racial decrepitude, senility and death. But it does not adequately show how moral measures, whether human or Divine, or both in co-operation, can effectually deal with all the consequences of wrongdoing, nor does it touch the question raised by the continued prevalence of death.

These two points may seem to involve two discussions, but they are inseparably connected, and each helps to elucidate the other.

It has not been suggested that forgiveness operates directly to counteract or eliminate the evil consequences of sin, except in those ways in which it is naturally adapted to arrest their course, and set up a new train of moral sequences. On the physical effects of sin it acts only to a limited extent, almost always indirectly, and in such ways as have been exemplified. More than this we have no need to affirm ; nor have we any warrant in Scripture for a more sanguine estimate of its results. The teachings of Christ and of the New Testament writers contain no suggestion that a pardoned transgressor will be forthwith relieved of all the fruits of his evil ways. The sower of wild oats in youth will find them cropping up among the good corn of later sowing. The drunkard may have his life saved by conversion, and marred nerves and organs may forthwith begin to recuperate, but they will never be as

they might have been but for misuse, and if serious injury has been suffered the man may become an early wreck. Late repentance followed by complete forgiveness is not so blessed in its issues as an early consecration. How then can the man be wholly saved? How can these bodily effects of sin be exterminated?

The answer comes in the word Death. We are taught that Christ has made death powerless to harm His followers, but He leaves them to die. The Death of Christ on the cross has not availed to save us from dying also. Christ has died for us, but not instead of us, and, as elsewhere urged, this is inexplicable on the supposition that death is in every case a penal infliction. It is perfectly consistent, however, with the conviction that death has been linked with sin by Divine appointment, and must therefore be regarded as a consequence of sin. It is also consistent with faith in the pardoning love of God, when we learn of Christ to view death as a needful part of our salvation, because it is God's physical remedy for those physical effects of sin which no spiritual means can remove. The process of dissolution takes to pieces the tabernacle of flesh, and reduces it to its original elements in a manner which finally dissipates all the ravages wrought by ancestral or personal transgression. Corruption and deformity pertain only to the organism, and when this has been effectually dissolved the constituent elements retain their pristine purity, and the liberated material may be remoulded into new forms of use



and beauty by the chemistry which is for ever busy in nature making all things new.

To this thought of death as the physical remedy of all the physical consequences of human transgression, we may add the complementary Christian doctrine of a future life. According to this doctrine, the man who has been truly reconciled to God, and made eager to do His will with undivided loyalty of Spirit, is released by death from the body in which duty has been so difficult, and is removed from the environment which has hindered the attainment of ideal perfection. By this emancipation the man who has cried out so often, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of Death?" is prepared for a sinless life of conformity to the will of God; and if clothed upon with a body of finer make, a fit organ for the expression of holy thoughts and Christlike purposes, the redemption of such a man from evil would be complete. The clean heart would dwell in a clean house. The right spirit would reign in a congenial body, a body which would never war against its mandates, would no more be weak when called upon for effort, and no more be strong in any rival clamourings for satisfaction.

Such considerations effectually dispose of the gloomy and superficial notion that the reign of law precludes the possibility of Divine forgiveness. Believing in the existence of an Author of Nature who is also the moral Ruler of mankind, we must of necessity believe that His government corresponds

in its essential principles and spirit to that which He has made it natural for us to honour as good. We may indeed put the case more strongly, and say, that this belief in the existence of a moral Governor carries in itself a conviction that His government of the world is to no small extent administered in and through the equity and mercy which he enjoins among men. No worse state of confusion could be imagined than is suggested by the hypothesis of a Divine Father who lacks that readiness to forgive which our hearts admire as one of the truest marks of moral greatness and superiority to passion. Eternal law must also be universal, and the moral order of the Cosmos must include both God and men within its harmony. Having found, therefore, that within the order which includes our human activities forgiveness has an essential place as a remedial agent, we cannot rationally exclude Divine forgiveness as in itself a breach of law, nor can we restrict its effects to the moral sphere. If we disbelieve in its reality, we must base our scepticism on some other ground. Nothing but atheism can theoretically exclude Divine forgiveness from the system of nature, and it does so not by insisting on the inviolability of law, but by denying God.<sup>1</sup>

When a necessary place for forgiveness has been found in the Cosmos, the one thing needful to harmonise its dispensation with law, viewed as the revealed will of God, is precisely that Christian Idea

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, Note 45.

of Atonement which I have striven to elucidate and commend. Readiness to forgive cannot mean a readiness to abdicate the Seat of Authority in heaven or on earth. As a Divine Lawgiver and Judge God's will concerning us, whether declared or undeclared, must needs be wise and good, so that any alteration or suspension of it would be an inconceivable declension from the choice of what is best for the universe. Particular codes and forms of expression may be—and in a progressive world must be—transient, passing away as occasions change and fuller revelations and fewer restrictions become wisely possible ; but the demand of love for love can never be rescinded. Hence a righteous and beneficent forgiveness can have no widespread dispensation without the use of accessory measures, which are adapted to secure obedience as the sequel to deliverance from condemnation. The Divine anger justly ceases to burn against those who have sinned, yet when searched by an Omniscient eye, are seen to have new hearts and right spirits. Therefore the everlasting Father is moved by His own love of righteousness and mercy to beget those conditions of forgiveness which erring men are powerless to provide without His aid. When once He has effected this, mercy becomes the most absolute justice, and to treat a purified son as still guilty of the sins he has been inspired to abandon and abhor would be a breach of the eternal law of righteousness.

In accordance with these principles the history of

revelation as recorded in the Bible is the history of atoning work. The ancient law said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour." It was thus an utterance of the everlasting demand which nothing can abate, but read in the light of after days it was the utterance of eternal love. It was more than a command, it was a prophecy of what should come to pass on earth when God's will at last prevailed. Nor was it only a prediction, for it announced a Divine intention, it was a living and active word expressing the changeless purpose of the Lord, a purpose which as announced to man contained in itself a constructive pledge and promise that God would adopt all possible measures to effectuate His will ; a promise, therefore, that He would do everything congruous with a righteous use of omnipotence to satisfy the demands of His own nature by inspiring men with love for Himself and for one another. Thus Sinai looks on to Calvary for the fulfilment of its law, and the work of atonement fills the hours of all the centuries until it culminates upon the Cross, where the blood of Christ repeats the old commandment in new tones and with new and self-fulfilling power upon the heart, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

The discoveries and generalisations of modern science afford no ground of objection to this idea of atonement. If the story of the cross were only a fable it would, when thus interpreted, be the sublimest exaltation of law and order which the human mind can conceive. It widens our con-

ception of the law to which Christ became subject through His human birth. It represents God thus stooping to act through His Son under the conditions of time and space and under the reign of physical and moral law for the deliverance of man from the ruin entailed by lawlessness. It declares the introduction of a new spiritual energy into the world to operate among all the forces of good and evil as a reinforcement of those which make for righteousness. It thus represents God as foregoing nothing of His claim to our obedience, and conceding nothing to our ill desires, but overcoming opposition to His will, not by might nor by power—which would be impossible—nor in the twinkling of an eye by some magical process, but little by little and by spiritual means in absolute agreement with His own nature and with ours, and in perfect adaptation to the necessities which arise from the nature and consequences of sin.

The perfect harmony of this Christian idea of atonement with the reign of natural law by no means demonstrates the truth of our belief that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, but it leaves us free to receive into our hearts the joy of that belief without intellectual misgivings. It is an indisputable fact that a new spiritual power did come into the world with Christ, and that this power operates in ways which can be scientifically observed. Opinions may differ as to the extent of its past achievements, its present efficiency, and its prospects of future triumph; but beyond question

it is a real power which has penetrated human society and is entering more and more widely and profoundly into the mental and moral life of the world. It has changed, and is still changing, men's ideals, purifying their affections, redirecting their purposes, and, working through willing minds and hearts, it is counteracting the forces of sin; always resisting, and often arresting, destructive processes; and animating ingenious and persistent endeavours to remove the social, political and religious causes of misery and degradation. Working downward, this same power is sanctifying man's increasing sway over the forces of nature, by directing its use in ways which multiply the comforts of life, and promote the general welfare of the race in body, mind and spirit.

The warfare between good and evil in the world is not a simple issue fought out by two banded armies, with uplifted banners, around which combatants are grouped in distinguishing apparel. The combatants are interspersed confusedly, and in all the two opposing principles contend for mastery. Those who would survey the field, and measure the advance of either side towards victory, are apt to mistake the incidents of a single spot, and of a few moments, for the deciding struggles of a campaign. The field is so vast, so hidden by smoke, and so filled with mingled cries and the noise of clashing arms, that the keenest observer finds his judgment and feelings unduly swayed by local and transient signs. But in hours of

clearest thought and calmest contemplation of the past and present it becomes evident that the forces of good are in the ascendant. Inside and outside the Church of Christ the love of truth and righteousness, and the appreciation of mercy, are extending; and these are the chief marks of the kingdom of Christ on the side which is visible on earth. Reactionary movements are common and sadly discouraging, but in spite of them old things are passing away. The Christian conscience is putting a restraint on kings and statesmen and peoples; and the teachings of Christ, though still holier and loftier than the lives of His best disciples, are permeating the minds of millions who disown their authority, or fail to understand their actual source.

One of the most significant features of the Christian era, perhaps the most significant of all, is the indisputable fact that the most beneficent movements for the elevation of ignorant, oppressed and morally degraded people have been inaugurated and are sustained by men who professedly draw the strength and inspiration of their lives from an unseen source by the exercise of faith in Christ as the Redeemer of the world. Even if their faith were a delusion it would still be true that the greatest reformers, emancipators, legislators, missionaries and teachers have been believers in God through Jesus Christ. It would also be true that the nations which have done most for human freedom, for the redress of wrong, the diffusion of knowledge, and the furtherance of peace, have

been those which, however faulty, have been more richly imbued than any others with the Christian faith. Faith in the love of God has drawn, and is still drawing, new moral energy from the mystic source to which faith looks; and this energy, however explained by philosophy, can be traced in its historical manifestations to that which Paul describes as the "power of God unto salvation."

These phenomena are within the region in which natural law prevails, but their only rational elucidation is that which accepts the witness of Christ to Himself as the plenary ambassador of God, and views His Life, Death and Resurrection as the revelation of the Father's name, the expression and demonstration of His Saving Love.

The Christian Idea of Atonement thus links the Cross of Christ not only with the educational processes which prepared the way for its introduction in the fulness of time, but with all subsequent history, and with the prospective progress of mankind. Science has nothing to offer in its place, but will find her highest glory as the conscious or unconscious servant of redeeming love. Apart from an increase of love, her conquests would be fraught with the most awful dangers, because power, whenever used for selfish purposes, is a menace to the peace and almost to the existence of society. But as faith in God gains converts, brotherly love will grow, and the achievements of the human intellect will become the instruments of righteousness, and the weapons of goodwill among men. The destiny of



the race, as science reads her forecast in the wreckage of stars, and in various symptoms of declining age in our planet, is Death. As surely as this world had a beginning it will have an end, and it is at least conceivable that, in some form, racial death may close the history of mankind, as it terminates the career of every separate man. If in this world only there is hope for man we are more miserable than the brutes which never contemplate the morrow. But if we believe that Jesus lived and died and rose again that He might become the Author and Answerer of faith in the love of God ; if we believe that in His Sacrifice God took upon Himself the burden of our redemption, and suffered to relieve our woe, to conquer our affections, to draw forth our trust, and to incline our hearts to keep His law, that Death becomes the pledge, not only of a personal salvation from sin, but of an everlasting purpose to glorify the race for which Christ died. Believing in this pledge we are assured that God's atoning work in Christ will never be allowed to fail, that, in and through Christ, God and man will meet and abide eternally together, so that somewhere beyond the final tragedy of death, life will reign, and God will find the satisfaction of that Love which is His Nature as He hears the ransomed sons of Adam sing together, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."



## APPENDIX

### NOTE 1, p. 20.

Socinus is charged with having made such a statement, but the passage usually quoted by his critics does not warrant the accusation. The incriminated words do not imply any doubt of the ill-desert of sin, but simply sustain the innocent thesis that the Justice of God "of which the Scriptures speak" is not opposed to mercy, and is "as conspicuous in forgiving sins as in punishing them." The charge so wrongfully based on these words can only be accounted for by a fixed determination to treat a denial that the punishment of sin must always be inflicted as a denial of its ill-desert.—*Praelectiones Theologicae*, cap. xvi. Cf. also Shedd's criticism, *History of Doctrine*, vol. ii., 377.

### NOTE 2, p. 21.

It may be satisfactory to have the basal principle of the Penal theory stated in the language of some representative theologian. It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a single condensed statement which would be accepted by all as the clearest and best; but the one given by Dr. A. A. Hodge in his "Outlines of Theology" is perfectly clear in its meaning, and its terms are as little objectionable as any which could be culled from other writers. The following is his statement of the fundamental principle on which all Penal theories of the Atonement are based:—

"The orthodox view . . . maintains that the immediate and chief end of Christ's work was to satisfy that essential principle of the Divine nature, which demands the punishment of sin."

### NOTE 3, p. 30.

I am not prepared to admit that Athanasius ever contradicted the views presented in the text; but he certainly used

language which has been supposed to teach an opposite doctrine. His general argument may be summed up in the following propositions: (1) Under God's Moral Government death is a necessary consequence of sin, and God would have seemed untrue if, after transgression, man had been released from subjection to mortality; (2) Out of man's fault, and as its immediate consequence, there had come a corruption of human nature itself; (3) As another consequence of sin man had lost the true knowledge or right conception of God; (4) Yet man could not be abandoned to impurity, ignorance, and death, because this would be unseemly and unworthy of God's goodness; (5) Moreover, in creating man, God had determined to make him a partaker of His own eternal life, and could not allow transgression to thwart this purpose. In view of the problem thus presented, Athanasius inquired, What then could God do? or what ought He to do? Would the difficulties of the case be met if God accepted man's repentance? To this he admirably replies that repentance would have been quite sufficient if man had required nothing more than forgiveness; but in addition to forgiveness he required enlightenment, regeneration, and sanctification of life, and these are blessings which repentance has, of itself, no power to provide. They are blessings which can be imparted by the Logos alone, by whom man had been created. Thus he reasons that the Incarnation was absolutely indispensable to the fulfilment of all God's designs. The whole of His reasoning accords with the principle that there is nothing in God's nature and nothing in His spoken words which precludes the forgiveness of all who truly repent and turn from their iniquity. Had Athanasius held that God's justice and veracity unconditionally forbade the remission of penalty he would not have been the man to conceal or obscurely hint at such a tremendous doctrine, but would have boldly and explicitly declared it as the primary reason why the Incarnation was necessary. The deepest reason why God could not exempt men from mortality is not the maintenance of His spoken word, but the same reason which moved Him to speak that word at first—the reason which still constrains Him to leave those who believe in Christ to pass through the grave. There is no curse in death for those who "die in the Lord" and "sleep in Jesus," and as shown elsewhere (p. 428) the dissolution of the body is God's ultimate physical remedy for the physical effects of sin. On this account, and because man's moral discipline can best be carried on under "the shadow of Death," it was and still "is appointed unto all men once to die." Athanasius may not have

perceived all this, though some expressions seem to indicate that he did ; but his answer to the question, "*Cur Deus Homo?*" is utterly irreconcilable with Anselm's.

## NOTE 4, p. 37.

As between man and God, there is no logical room in Anselm's theory for any subjective condition, for when a debt has been paid, and even overpaid, the creditor has no claim on his former debtor, and can impose no conditions of release. But as between man and Christ the case is different. Christ might be represented as saying, "I have paid your great debt, but unless you comply with my wishes I shall not include your name among those to whom I desire my Father to repay a portion of His debt to me." Such a refinement as this would not commend itself to many, but it is at least a logical alternative, and its cold spirit of barter serves to show how repugnant to the spirit and letter of the New Testament the whole idea of debt and repayment becomes when an occasional figure of speech is magnified and hardened into a scholastic account of the relations between God and man, and between God and Christ. This repugnance is manifestly felt even by those who most loudly praise Anselm as the first scientific exponent of orthodox Protestant Soteriology.

It would be superfluous to discuss the extent to which this feeling was shared by the Reformers, but it is perfectly clear that they improved upon Anselm by giving prominence to faith, and also that they provided themselves with a powerful weapon for their warfare with Rome. Luther and Calvin differed fundamentally in their views of justification, but were equally insistent on faith as a condition of salvation, and on the nullity of all attempts to intermingle the foreign elements of human merit and Divine grace.

## NOTE 5, p. 45.

For convenient reference I reproduce the verses mentioned. Their irrelevance needs no further demonstration.

"Through one man sin entered into the world and death by sin ; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. v. 12).

"The wages of sin is death" (vi. 23).

"For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I. Cor. xv. 22).

"Sin when it is full grown bringeth forth death" (James i. 15).

## NOTE 6, p. 49.

It will be observed that the words "as an offering for sin," which are printed by the revisers in italics, have no place in the original. Rightly interpreted, and in their right place, these words are unobjectionable, but they are not a translation of Paul's words, and their intrusion is unwarrantable. If the apostle had wished to say that Christ was a sin-offering, he was quite capable of thus expressing himself, and whether we approve or disapprove of the words as an interpretation of his thought, we may justly deprecate their interpolation in the text.

## NOTE 7, p. 65.

This is said without prejudice to the opinion that as spoken to Adam these words were a warning and not a threat. Ezekiel gives them as an utterance of God to the wicked, and therefore neither a warning nor a threat but a judicial sentence. If any reader feels obliged to read (Gen. ii. 17) as a threat he must still recognise that such a threat to an innocent man, when turned into a sentence of condign punishment upon one already convicted of sin is appreciably strengthened. Therefore, if a judicial sentence solemnly announced to a guilty individual can be remitted without inconsistency, as promised by Ezekiel, the possibility of such revocation cannot have been excluded by the foregoing threat.

## NOTE 8, p. 67.

By some critics it might be urged that the witness of Christ to Himself and also the doctrine of John must be understood in a modified sense, and not as actually teaching the Divine authorship of Christ's words and works. For such readers I may point out that on the lowest estimate of Christ's person, which admits that He was a "teacher sent from God," it is inconceivable that His words or actions could be inharmonious with the mind and moral nature of the Father. False guidance on the primary principles of justice and mercy would be as incompatible with the status and vocation of an inspired human teacher as with the personality and authority of one in whom God tabernacled.

## NOTE 9, p. 77.

Punishment as defined by the advocates of the Penal theory is manifestly less than extermination, and of itself has

no necessary tendency to eradicate sin from the nature of those who suffer it. But while such punishment does not tend to exterminate sin, extermination may include the most awful forms of non-eternal punishment of which man has any conception. Extermination, therefore, is the more inclusive and stronger term, and it conveys a more vivid impression of the intensity and inexorableness of the Divine warfare with sin.

## NOTE 10, p. 95.

Technically, the law which enjoined kindness to strangers, applied only to sojourners in the land of Israel, but no one could imagine that the duty of kindness ceased when an Israelite crossed the frontier and became a stranger himself, seeking hospitable treatment! The appeal to remember how his forefathers sojourned in Egypt widened the moral scope of the law beyond all geographical or racial limits. For many years the Egyptians were exceedingly good to Israel, and the behaviour of these foreigners was used in Deuteronomy, precisely as Christ used the conduct of the good Samaritan. In neither case could any fair-minded son of Jacob miss the universal application of the pungent lesson.

## NOTE 11, p. 100.

I wish as far as possible to refrain from criticising others, but must in candour emphasise the conviction that defective views of love are not confined to those who deny that it fully comprehends God's nature. Not a few preachers eliminate the idea of justice from their conception of Fatherhood. The terrors of the law, rightly understood, are the terrors of love, which from its very nature is the most inexorable thing in the universe. It is easier to think of a change in the law of gravitation than of any variation in the moral government of God.

## NOTE 12, p. 112.

The history of theology may be held to supply a third alternative, but it is one that does not admit of discussion on Biblical grounds. The thought that children dying in infancy were eternally lost was too horrible for Christian parents to entertain. Yet they could conceive of no salvation without faith in Christ, and thus the fiction of unconscious faith was introduced. In the age of Augustine infants were baptised *as believers*, and in case of death were regarded as saved from

hell. In those days the sponsor did not promise that later on in life the children to be baptised would comply with God's claims, but solemnly declared that they had already repented and believed, thus using the formula which had been employed when the subjects of baptism were instructed persons who personally professed faith in Christ. Pope Boniface wrote to Augustine urging that this was very absurd, seeing that such children were incapable of thought, and Augustine made of necessity a lame reply (Letter xcvi. 7—10); but rather than run the risk of burying their children under a sentence of condemnation, Christian parents eagerly accepted the doctrine and the ordinance which embodied it in a sacramental form, as the only refuge from a maddening dread of sending their babes to perdition. They were at least logical and consistent in setting up unconscious faith and involuntary baptism as an appropriate remedy for the unconscious sin of infants. For those who can accept such a doctrine it mitigates the horror of infant damnation, but those who cannot console themselves with such a fiction must recognise the fact that the doctrine of justification by faith is one which has no conceivable applicability to those who, by reason of immaturity, are incapable of knowing what sin is, or what is meant by faith in Christ for the remission of sin.

NOTE 13, p. 131.

Tertullian had a clear view of this principle, which was subsequently obscured by those who resolved all sin into "concupiscence" and consequently induced a false conscience about desires which in themselves are as non-moral as the hunger and thirst which Christ felt in the wilderness (*Cf.* "De Anima," xl).

NOTE 14, p. 138.

The views enunciated in the text are not offered as a dogmatic account of the origin of religion; nor do they imply that the most primitive form of religion was an exalted theism. Our ignorance of prehistoric man is profound, and our minds ought to be kept open to welcome any facts which may unexpectedly come to light, for faith is valueless unless robust enough to digest all knowledge and give thanks. But all the facts which can be designated historical exhibit man's inveterate tendency to corrupt and degrade his religious beliefs and customs; and however far we penetrate into



antiquity we find traces of some simple childlike acknowledgment of a creative Being, overlaid by later superstitions. The sacred books of India, the monuments of Egypt, and, though less clearly, those of Assyria, all show the tendency to break up the Deity into personified attributes, and to set up symbols which degenerate into idols. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism have all assumed forms which would have disgusted their founders and early devotees. It took centuries of stern teaching and fiery discipline to cure the Hebrews of the disposition to relapse into idolatry with its sensual rites. The depravation of Greek religion through the importation of Asiatic abominations is written clear, even in classical mythology. Without multiplying illustrations, we must confess with humiliation that the tendency to degenerate has been conspicuously manifested in the history of Christianity. Who could recognise the pure and undefiled religion of Jesus and His apostles in the semi-paganism of Southern Italy and of Spain? How strong must that tendency be which is to-day struggling to set up images, and favours the veneration of sacred shrines and relics in the Protestant Church of England, and is turning a spiritual ordinance like the Lord's Supper from a commemoration of Christ's death into a materialistic partaking of His actual flesh and blood ! Reformation in India means a return to the ancient Vedas. Reformation in Mohammedan countries would mean an abolition of many barbarous local customs, of which the best Moslems are ashamed. Reformation in Christian lands has always been a return towards primitive simplicity of faith and worship. By what steps primeval man attained to some simple elementary theism is a legitimate subject of inquiry ; and our present paucity of information fairly invites and almost compels speculation ; but archæological research has thus far served to illustrate and confirm the Pauline account of religious declension as a senseless and by no means innocent preference for the worship of things visible, and a willing forgetfulness of the Power which made man and his habitation.

## NOTE 15, p. 146.

Calvin's teaching on this subject is essentially the same as Augustine's and differs only in form. The all-important fact is that he regards infants as guilty before God of the injuries they suffer as the remote consequences of Adam's fault. He does not teach that the guilt of Adam's transgression is

immediately imputed to new-born children ; but his doctrine comes to the same thing and is even more glaringly unjust. He states that "Original sin, then, may be defined as hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all the parts of the soul, *which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God* and then produces in us works which in Scripture are termed works of the flesh . . . . being thus perverted and corrupted . . . . we are merely on account of such corruption deservedly condemned by God . . . . Through him (Adam), however, not only has punishment been derived, but pollution instilled, for which punishment is justly due . . . . Hence even infants bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb suffer not for another's but for their own defect. For although they have not yet produced the fruits of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted in them. Nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God. Hence it follows that it is properly deemed sinful in the sight of God : for there could be no condemnation without guilt" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Bk. ii. cap. 1, § 8). Such teaching scarcely needs much comment, but I desire to impress the thought that there is no escape from its repulsive and heartbreaking import except in such a definition of sin as I have presented as Scriptural and ethically self-evident. The order of Calvin's proof must also claim attention. He does not infer condemnation from the demonstrable guiltiness of infants, but first asserts condemnation and thence infers guilt. No mother clasping an infant to her breast can verily believe that her helpless offspring is guilty of its own defects and "odious" to God, nor can any such idea be found in the teachings of Him who said "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." The idea of infant condemnation had its origin in the darkening age of the Church, and in defiance of the dictum of the apostle "sin is not imputed where there is no law."

## NOTE 16, p. 164.

Augustinianism is necessarily a form of Docetism because it affirms an apparent, but only an apparent, action of the human will, both in the reprobate who transgress because delivered to do evil, and in the elect who obey, or appear to obey, but only because dominated by irresistible grace, *i. e.*, by a grace which is dynamical and not ethical in its operations.

## NOTE 17, p. 172.

Augustine's language on this subject is not always objectionable, and it is possible to quote detached sentences of great beauty and force. Thus he writes :—"The love, therefore, wherewith God loveth is incomprehensible and immutable . . . . Let not the fact, then, of our having been reconciled unto God through the death of His Son be so listened to or so understood, as if the Son so reconciled us unto Him in this respect that He now began to love those whom He formerly hated, in the same way as enemy is reconciled to enemy, so that thereafter they may become friends, and mutual love take the place of their mutual hatred ; but we were reconciled unto Him who already loved us, but with whom we were at enmity because of our sin . . . . He therefore had love toward us even when we were practising enmity against Him . . . . For He justly hateth and reprobateh vice as utterly repugnant to the principle of His procedure, yet *He loveth even in the persons of the vitiated what* is susceptible either of His own beneficence through healing, or of His own judgment by condemnation" (on St. John, Tractate cx. 6., vol. ii. 460, 1).

I am delighted to quote such words, and I wish it were possible to leave them as a fair and full presentment of Augustine's views ; but, unhappily, this is not the case. They seem to uphold, and when read apart from contextual modifications they do uphold, the sublime principle that it is possible for God to love men even while condemning them ; so that even His severities spring from the same fountain of love as His healing and redeeming mercies. But, unfortunately, these admirable words are accompanied by others which deprive them of not a little of their value, and make room after all for the totally incompatible idea that God hates sinners. Within the interspaces marked in the above quotation by signs of omission bewildering statements are interjected. Augustine quotes with approval the words, "Thou hatest nothing which Thou hast made" ("Wisdom of Solomon," xi. 25) ; and against this saying he sets a quotation from (Psal. v. 5). "Thou hatest, O Lord, every worker of iniquity." These quotations are given as co-ordinate authority with each other, and with New Testament teachings, and then with more subtlety than insight their conciliation is thus proposed. "In a wonderful and Divine manner, even when He hated us He loved us ; for *He hated us in as far as we were not what He Himself had made* ; and because our own iniquity had not in every part consumed His work,

He knew at once both how, in each of us, to *hate what we had done, and to love what He had done.*" Here Augustine has laboured to harmonise a mere verbal discrepancy which might have been disposed of, if calling for any notice, by a sympathetic and literary exposition of the psalm. But instead of doing his readers this easy service he has darkened counsel by treating God's hatred of "*what we have done*" as if it were the same thing as *hatred of us as persons*, so confounding persons with moral qualities and acts. Thus, notwithstanding the clear, bell-like statement of the truth that "God had love toward us even when we were practising enmity against Him and working iniquity," God's love for His enemies is analysed into a mere love for His own work, *as such*, and not for the men themselves *as personal objects of affection*. Thus the conclusion to which we are forced by a consideration of the entire passage is that in Augustine's opinion God hates all workers of iniquity viewed as sinners and enemies, because "He *hated us* in as far as we were not what He Himself had made."

NOTE 18, p. 174.

Calvin, though a less powerful and original thinker, is more logically thorough, and in some respects, he is more outspoken, than Augustine. But even he is very cautious, and not a little hampered by Scriptural assertions of Divine love which cannot be ignored, and are not easily eviscerated of their meaning. He propounds the question, How can the justice of God be reconciled with His mercy? and then, having stated the problem to be discussed as quoted in the text, he admits that "there thus arises some appearance of contradiction," but undertakes with unflinching courage to "explain the difficulty." As a contribution towards this much-needed service he advances the following extraordinary statement. "The mode in which the spirit usually speaks in Scripture is that God was the enemy of men until they were restored to favour by the death of Christ" (Rom. v. 10.): that they were cursed until their iniquity was expiated by the sacrifice of Christ (Gal. iii. 10, 13); that they were separated from God, until by means of Christ's body they were received into union (Col. i. 21, 22).

With keen controversial instinct these passages are merely indicated and not reproduced. An immediate exhibition of Paul's words would have invited attention to the fact that they

are diametrically opposed to the dictum which they are said to verify. Paul never hinted at God's enmity to man, and never said or implied that Christ reconciled God to man. In Col. i. 21, 22, he ascribes enmity to man, but to man alone. "You being alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works hath He reconciled." Here there is an unmistakable subjective reconciliation of alienated minds, and God has effected this by the sacrifice of Christ, *i.e.*, by the work of His own great love. In Gal. iii. 10, 13, Paul impresses on those who thought to be justified by the law that they had really been under the condemnation and sentence of the law; but he neither states nor implies that the curse of the law was a sign of any lack of love in God. Surely no clearer sign of God's love for sinful men could be imagined than His deliverance of His son to be gibbeted on a cross and treated as a malefactor for our sake! But even more extraordinary than these distortions, or rather contradictions of the apostle's word, is the treatment of Rom. v. 10. What Paul actually said is very beautiful and altogether worthy of acceptance. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us"; and again, "If *while we were enemies we were reconciled* to God through the death of His Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by His life," thus, according to his teaching we were enemies to God, and nothing less than the Divine love commended in the death of Christ could have overcome our enmity. God, however, did not shrink from that sacrificial demonstration of His love for rebellious creatures; and our reconciliation having thereby been effected, there is now no need of further sacrifice, and He who died for His enemies will not fail as their living Saviour to joyfully complete the work initiated by the shedding of His blood.

The chapter is singularly obscure, and it is difficult to reduce its dogmatic teaching to clear form. Its general purport, however, is that God is the enemy of all men outside the circle of the elect, and that He loves only those whom He intends to reconcile. His election and his love are eternal, so that, according to our earthly chronology, He loves the elect before and throughout the period of their alienation; but this everlasting love is bestowed upon them *as foreseen and foreordained friends*, and is therefore in no genuine sense a love of His enemies. Thus in spite of all ambiguities and discordant statements the doctrine of the chapter as a whole amounts to this—that God loves none but the elect, and that these are loved only in consequence of their predestined union with Christ.

## NOTE 19, p. 183.

In employing Dale's word "necessary" I wish to disclaim the presumption of denying that God could have devised some scheme of redemption which might have achieved His purpose in a way to us inconceivable. What God could or could not do is known only to Himself. We cannot err in saying that even He cannot work contradictions, or make evil good, or good evil ; but when the problem concerns the adaptation of means to the fulfilment of a particular purpose we may well believe that His resources are not limited to such measures as we can imagine. Keeping well within the range of human thought, and dealing with the scheme of redemption which historically includes the death of Christ, my contention as against Dale is that its commendation of God's love was not a mere by-product, which might have been dispensed with, but that it was a primary and absolutely necessary factor in the problem of man's redemption and constitutes its reconciling power. Redemption would not have been effected by the death of Christ apart from this significance, for no man ever is or can be redeemed from the state of alienation until his ignorance of God's true nature has been dissipated, and God's love for him while yet a sinner has convinced and converted his soul. Whether God could have convinced an incredulous world of the same truth by any other expedient than the death of His Son no man can say, and no one need inquire. Christ has died, and His death does prove the love of God to all who appreciate its meaning, as Dale himself allows, and my contention is that in this proof lies the redemptive power of the cross and that this proof was absolutely necessary to the accomplishment of the purpose for which Christ came into the world.

Several expressions used by Dale call for passing comment lest silence should seem to be an admission of their justice, *e. g.*, he attributes to his opponents the opinion "that Christ died *for no other purpose* than to reveal His love to mankind." This may be a correct account of what some have said, but advocates of the Moral theory usually speak of Christ as revealing the love of the Father, and not merely His own love as the Son of God and brother of mankind. But leaving the question of what others have said, my sole concern is to point out that Dale's statement does not correctly represent any theory which regards the revelation of love as an instrumental means for the achievement of God's designs in the

salvation of sinners and the extermination of sin, or, in other words, the subjugation of all things to Himself as the Creator and Moral Ruler of the universe.

In the same passage Dale states and easily disposes of a theory "that the death of our Lord was one of the necessary incidents of His Incarnation," and that "He demonstrated the greatness of His love for us by not shrinking from the sufferings and death which were the inevitable consequences of His work." This fairly represents what has been taught by some, but certainly not by all who deny that Christ suffered penally. That Christ intended to die, and to die for us men, is vividly apparent in the gospels, but this intention is consonant with any theory of His death which regards it as an essential and integral part of His appointed and accepted work. No theory which fails to interpret and glory in the cross in the light of Christ's words "for this hour came I into the world" can have any claim to be accepted as Scriptural. But those who hold that the sufferings of Christ were penal have no monopoly in the words which describe them as voluntarily endured in fulfilment of an eternal purpose and as a ransom for many.

NOTE 20, p. 187.

It would be tedious to demonstrate this by a lengthened criticism, but it may not be superfluous to note the fact that in the R.V. propitiation stands in the New Testament as the equivalent of atonement in the Old—the two companies of revisers failed to agree upon a common use of either term, but, notwithstanding their etymological difference, the two words must be understood by English readers in the same sense.

NOTE 21, p. 192.

Recent authorities regard the piel form כִּפֵּר in Gen. vi. 14 as a denominative from כִּפָּר rendered "pitch." (So A.V. and R.V. and also in LXX.) The question whether כִּפֵּר agrees with the Arabic "to cover" or the Syriac "to wipe off" or "to clean" is unimportant. The latter alternative might perhaps seem to favour my general contention, but it is too conjectural

for use in an argument against those who emphasise the idea of covering as important. If adopted it would only affect the form of the argument and not the conclusion reached.

NOTE 22, p. 204.

Of these cases, three have been referred to in another connection (p. 198). The fourth is that of adultery with a bond-woman. For the same offence committed with a free woman atonement was explicitly forbidden.

NOTE 23, p. 212.

The extraordinary reverence for the Jewish sacrificial system evinced by many Christians in the present day was certainly not shared by the early Church, and evidently grew up with the increase of sacerdotalism and the love of ritual. Patristic literature abounds in references to the Jewish sacrifices as tolerated rather than enjoined. Gregory Nazianzen has a fine passage in which he accounts for their sufferance by God as due to His unwillingness to violently exercise His authority. He declares that God wished to benefit not the unwilling but the willing, and therefore permitted sacrifice, as "a tutor or physician partly cuts off and partly condones ancestral habits, conceding a little of what is pleasurable; just as physicians treat their patients, their medicine being cunningly mixed with something nice that it may be taken." According to this method, Gregory states that when God "cut off the idol He spared the sacrifices" as a concession (Fifth theological Oration, xx).

NOTE 24, p. 212.

Philo, who based his philosophical system on the most minute exposition of the LXX, states that in his own day a great festival was held annually in the Island of Pharos, to which people came from many lands to show their reverence for the place in which the light of this translation first shone forth as a beacon to all nations, and to thank God for this great gift which, though ancient, was always fresh and new (*Cf. De Vita Mosis*, Lib. ii.).



## NOTE 25, p. 218.

It will be observed that this passage in the LXX forms no exception to the statement made on p. 196, viz., that the prophets never use the technical term *kipper* when denouncing sacrifice. The Hebrew word is כִּפֶּר.

## NOTE 26, p. 228.

As a conspicuous example of a not uncommon feature of contemporary references to the significance of Christ's death, I may refer to Dr. James Denney's treatment of the subject in a work published since most of these lectures were written. I cannot recall a single instance in which he has affirmed in plain words that Christ bore the penalty of sin, but he uses expressions to which no other meaning can be attached. Commenting on the words "Who His own self bare our sins," he writes: "They are meant to suggest that Christ took on Himself the consequences of our sins—that He made our responsibilities, as sin has fixed them, His own . . . . He means that all the responsibilities in which sin has involved us—responsibilities which are summed up in that death which is the wages of sin—have been taken by Christ upon Himself . . . . The apostle does not raise the question whether it is possible for one to assume the responsibilities of others in this way; he assumes that the responsibilities of sinful men have been taken on Himself by the sinless Lamb of God ("The Death of Christ," 98). This language is exceedingly vague, but we are enabled to determine its meaning by a sentence in the same paragraph. Referring to Num. xiv. 34, as an illustration of what sin-bearing means, Dr. Denney states that "the meaning clearly is, bear the consequences of them, *take to yourselves the punishment* which they involve." Again in reference to Exod. xxviii. 43, he writes, "to die and to bear iniquity are the same thing, *death being the penalty* here denounced against impiety," 98. The language used to indicate the nature of Christ's sufferings is thus less explicit than that used of Old Testament illustrations, but I trust I have not misconstrued its intended meaning. The words, "He made our responsibilities, as sin fixed them, His own," if taken alone might be explained in a variety of ways, and would not necessarily clash with the views of Anselm, Abelard, Luther, Calvin, Grotius, Edwards, Crawford, Dale, or even McLeod Campbell; but read in the light of their immediate

context, and in accordance with the criticisms and arguments of the book, they appear to mean that Christ bore the punishment of our sins.

I am reluctantly constrained to refer to Mr. J. Scott Lidgett in this connection because he has done much to spiritualise the idea of atonement, and has made one of the most valuable contributions to the study of this subject which has appeared in recent years. He has justly contended that the Fatherhood of God is a deeper and more distinctively Christian conception than that of Sovereignty, and that no theory can be true which fails to harmonise the work of Christ with His filial relationship to God as His Father and our Father. But while founding his argument on this truth he has strangely retained some of those expressions and thoughts which belong to the penal Theory. Thus he writes, Our Lord "tasted" to the full of those penal conditions which reveal the wrath of God against sin." "To whom was the satisfaction made? . . . it was made to the Father by the Son." ("The Spiritual Principle of the Atonement, p. 282.) In the context there is much to prove that the author has no harsh conception of wrath, and that he esteems the perfection of sonship as the supreme satisfaction of the Father. But unhappily he has attempted to conjoin with this the totally foreign and incompatible idea of "satisfaction," as consisting in penal sufferings which satisfy God's wrath. This use of the word in its old ecclesiastical, and specifically in its old Roman Catholic sense sadly mars the clearness of the author's teaching. I must frankly own that I do not know what Mr. Lidgett wishes his readers to understand by "tasting penal conditions," in order to make satisfaction to God. The word satisfaction is a good word when used as it stands in Isa. liii. 11. "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," and in this exquisite sense it well denotes the delight not only of the Son in saving men at a great cost to Himself, but the satisfaction of the Father in the issue of His great Sacrifice in sending the Son into the world as His own agent and representative to seek and save the lost. But the satisfaction of love is the fulfilment of its own gracious impulse, and is the moral contradictory of satisfaction received by the Father from the Son for the mollification of wrath.

NOTE 27, p. 235.

If it were credible that Paul wrote *ἔχωμεν* it might simplify my case, but nothing less than overwhelming evidence would

convince me that he wrote anything so vapid. All the reassuring language which follows demands a declaration that believers, being justified, have actually entered into the state of relationship defined in the words "peace with God," and have entered into it through faith in Christ as the issue of the process called reconciliation. An exhortation given to reconciled and justified men, who have therefore ceased to be enemies, to "have peace with God" would be worse than pointless.

## NOTE 28, p. 240.

Gesenius and others give "to buy back" as the primary meaning of לָקַח, but this is not sustained by more recent authorities. Driver gives it "to resume a claim or right which has lapsed," and the synonym הִרְפָּה, to loose, or set free by cutting, resembles this more nearly. The resumption of a right, or the assertion of a claim, as also the cutting of a tie or bond, may involve a payment, but may quite as naturally commit the redeemer to an exercise of force as when God redeemed Israel with a stretched-out arm. The Greek terms need no elucidation, but it may freely be admitted that ἀγοράζω is in the strictest sense a commercial term and means to buy as in a market. It has a precise equivalent in the popular expression "to market" or "marketing." λυτρόω is less glaringly mercantile, but no question need be raised. λύτρον, a ransom, or ransom price, and λύτρωσις or ἀπολύτρωσις, redemption, need no discussion. How far, if at all they involve a commercial view of Atonement must be determined by LXX and New Testament usage and cannot be settled by a Lexicon.

## NOTE 29, p. 249.

The passages considered in the text are decisive, and the passages which speak of redemption must be interpreted in harmony therewith. Luke xxi. 28 seems to stand related to xxiv. 21, which betrays a misunderstanding of Christ's reassuring words. Rom. iii. 24 refers to "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" as the instrument of God's saving grace; viii. 23 looks forward to a future redemption of the body. I. Cor. i. 30 simply states that Christ is made unto us "redemption." In Eph. i. 7 redemption through Christ's blood

is identified with "the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches" of God's grace, and verse 14 points to some future fulfilment of God's promises; iv. 30 also contemplates the future consummation of salvation. Col. i. 14 identifies our redemption with the forgiveness of our sins, for which thanks are due to the Father "who delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love," thus making God Himself the redeemer in and through Christ. Heb. ix. 12, 14 speaks of the redemption of transgressions in terms of great beauty, which, like numerous texts briefly dealt with in this Lecture, will receive fuller notice hereafter. Luke ii. 38 speaks of "the redemption of Jerusalem," but in an undefined form as a blessing for which Anna and many others were eagerly waiting at the time of Christ's advent. There is nothing in any of these references to throw doubt upon the conclusion drawn from the more important passages examined in the text. On the contrary, they either throw no light on the word redemption, or they confirm the interpretation I have offered.

NOTE 30, p. 296.

It is possible that the theory of our Lord's death suggested in the text may be criticised as somewhat akin to sundry Gnostic speculations of the second century. The resemblance, if any can be traced, is most superficial. The Valentinians, who held that the words "why hast thou forsaken me?" indicated a personal departure, had such absurd mythological notions of Christ's person, that the very elements for the weaving of such a theory as I have stated were lacking. Subject to innumerable variations the idea common to many Gnostics was that there were two Christs, one of whom flew away from the other, either during Pilate's judgment or on the cross, and however this idea was modified, the thought of separation between Father and Son never appears, nor could it be worked into any Gnostic system by any effort of ingenuity.

The Apocryphal "Gospel according to Peter" gives us the best insight into the method and object of Gnostic exegesis. By giving the etymological force of the Hebrew term for God in Psal. xxii. 1 (*Ἡ δύναμις μου, ἡ δύναμις*, instead of following the LXX which reads *Ὁ Θεὸς ὁ Θεὸς μου*), they contrived to get rid of the idea that the supreme God had departed, and opened the way for their imaginary Saviour to

be clothed with Scriptural authority. The "Gospel of Peter" reads: "And the Lord cried out saying, 'My Power, My Power, why hast thou forsaken Me.' And when He had said it, He was taken up." Thus a heaven-born Christ ascended from the cross leaving his more earthly counterpart behind. This higher Christ was but one of many Æons, and only distantly related to the Father, while the lower Christ was, according to most of these dreamers, little better than an optical illusion. By some of them the lower person left upon the cross was a being capable of suffering death, but no one suggested that the forsaking was itself the commencement of the personal dissolution called Death. More generally, real suffering of any kind on the cross was denied, and by some the lower Christ was resolved into the feminine "Wisdom" who was bereft on the cross of "Light." Thus the forsaking was according to these dreamers the severance of conjugal relations between two mythical beings, rather than the separation of Father and Son. The Gnostic hypothesis was not only foreign to the theory given in the text, but seems to have been devised expressly to obviate the necessity of admitting that it was the supreme God who dwelt in Jesus and departed from Him in the article of Death.

## NOTE 31, p. 299.

The rendering "in all points" rather needlessly provokes a cavil, because suggesting a minuteness and particularity not necessarily denoted by *κατὰ πάντα*.

## NOTE 32, p. 305.

It will be observed that no reference has been made to the common idea that men are convinced of their sin and made sensible of its heinousness by seeing that the punishment of sin was laid on Christ. I shall not discuss the accuracy of this account of what takes place in some minds. It may be that some are affected in the way affirmed, and certainly a good many would give this as a true account of their experience. All that I have needed or attempted to show is this, that however we interpret the nature of Christ's sufferings in our doctrinal statements, it is the contemplation of them as a fact which impresses, and enlightens the conscience, and thus convinces men of their own share in the sin of the world.

## NOTE 33, p. 324.

If engaged in a discussion of Divine goodness with a disciple of Mill I should criticise his use of the word omnipotent. He gives no definition of it, but his argument implies that it means the power to do anything and everything which can be thought of as desirable, thus leaving no room for the word "impossible." No theologian predicates omnipotence in this sense, and Mill may not have been consciously guilty of such an extravagance, but in no other sense can his dilemma stand. I have not laid any stress on his fallacious use of the term ; because no criticism of that kind would get rid of the facts which were before his mind. However we define the word omnipotence, and even if we expunge it from our vocabulary, no explanation can satisfy our hearts which fails to show that goodness and power are not truly antithetic, because moral ends can be reached only by moral means, and these cannot be measured by any dynamical standard. The cross solves the difficulty for those who believe in its testimony, but apart from the cross I know of no reply to the accusation that God has not done all that so powerful a Being might have done for our world.

## NOTE 34, p. 340.

Before leaving this discussion of the Death of Christ as necessary to the demonstration of the love of God, and therefore indispensable for man's redemption, it may be well to guard our conclusion against two possible misconceptions.

1. By affirming its necessity for man's redemption, we do not mean to say, nor have we any need to suggest, that if the Death of Christ had not taken place none could have believed in the love of God. Such a statement would be absurd, and manifestly false, because we know that some men did thus believe, in the ages before Christ was born. But for many excellent reasons this admission does not militate against our conclusion. (1) Those who thus believed were very few. (2) Their thought of God's love was large, pure and elevated, but it was limited in range, and failed to comprehend the length and breadth and depth and height of that love as now revealed by Christ. (3) They clung to their conviction with extreme difficulty and were distressfully conscious of their need of some

clearer light from heaven. (4) Their faith was always associated with a hope that God would do some new thing in the world for its deliverance from evil. (5) Their faith was neither strong enough, nor sufficiently definite, to impel or sustain a ministry of reconciliation to mankind. Heroic prophets believed that such a ministry would eventually be entrusted to Israel, but the very form in which this conviction was expressed was a confession of present powerlessness to convince the world. (6) This prospective faith was not only inadequate for the inspiration of such a work as began at Pentecost and has been carried on ever since, but if nothing had been done for its fulfilment it must have become weaker in every generation, until it gradually died down to a fainting hope and finally expired. It was the coming of Christ, and the work He did, which verified the faith of former ages, gathered together the little remnant of weary believers, kindled enthusiasm, animated courage and provided weapons for the subjugation of all the strongholds of sin and unbelief, for the casting down of proud reasonings and vain imaginations and every high thing which exalted itself against the knowledge of God.

2. Our conclusion that the Death of Christ was necessary to man's redemption because it is the supreme power of God to elicit faith and love, is not incompatible with the fact that vast numbers of people have never heard the story of the cross, nor with the still darker fact that many hear and believe not. It is the mightiest instrument known to us for the extirpation of those thoughts and feelings which are the root of sin in human nature. But it is not a power which works a magical transformation in those who become acquainted with it, nor is it a power which operates apart from human ministration. It is a power which from its very nature respects our freedom and leaves us in possession of ability to resist its spiritual appeal, and it incites, but does not compel, believers to propagate their faith. It is the highest conceivable form of Divine self-expression, and it is effectual for salvation to every one that believeth, but to no one else.

In treating of the consequences of sin, and the stupendous difficulty of so revealing love as to actually communicate it to the hearts of men, enough has been said to explain the inevitable slowness of God's conquest, but we can now confirm our position by considering Paul's account of the manner in which failures of the gospel occur even when preached in all its pristine simplicity and with apostolic courage, fervour and faith. He gives his explanation of these lament-

able failures in various forms, but most explicitly, perhaps, in 2 Cor. iv. 1—6. In strict harmony with all his teaching he declares that the supreme business of the Christian ministry is the "manifestation of truth" to men's minds. The minister of the word cannot confer authority upon his message, but must himself be commended to the consciences of his hearers by the self-revealing energy of the message itself. Fortified by this principle he had renounced all the ordinary arts of rhetoric and sophistry, and all crafty attempts to render his message acceptable to impaired tastes and prejudiced minds. He teaches us to regard the Truth as light radiating from the face of Christ who is the image of God, and asserts that when His light actually shines into men's hearts it transforms them into the same image from glory to glory, so that they become reflectors of the Divine character. But, while presenting this as the object of the gospel, he recognises that it is not always successful and boldly propounds his solution of the mystery. He will not allow us to think that when it fails, it fails because the good news though true to some is not true to all, or because naturally incapable of doing its appropriate work, but attributes non-success to some intercepting "veil" which prevents the light from entering the hearer's heart; just as on the most brilliant summer day a blind drawn down before a window excludes the sunlight from a chamber. "But if our gospel is veiled it is veiled by things which are perishing, by which the God of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." The figure of a veil is taken from the act of Moses, who covered his face that men might not see the fading of its brightness. God does not seek to hide, but to reveal Himself, and the apostle labours to display what he has seen. But Jewish prejudice was a veil which shut out the light of Christ from many in Paul's day; and the powers of evil in this world have never lacked veils of many kinds and patterns to do the same obstructive work among men of other nationalities, creeds and predilections. Such is Paul's explanation of the failure of the gospel revelation to transform some of its hearers. It is an explanation which has been illustrated and confirmed in every land to which the gospel has been carried. It is an explanation which agrees with, and indeed assumes the truth that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, which beams from the face of Jesus Christ, is the power of God unto salvation, because it reveals the Truth of God, and that Truth when cordially received creates within us a clean heart and renews a right spirit, and



fills the recipient soul with peace and joy in believing, thus saving sinners and exterminating sin.

It will be observed that I have translated 2. Cor. iv. 3, 4 in an unusual way by taking *ἐν* with the datives to denote the instrument used to blind men's hearts. This is certainly allowable, and it appears to be the only rendering which makes sense of Paul's words. However translated the central thought clearly is that a veil is spread over men's hearts to obstruct the light of the gospel, and that this is the sole secret of its frequent failure to convert.

NOTE 35, p. 347.

Every reader of classic literature is familiar with the terrible pictures of vice which scarcely bear translation into English, but more significant than these repulsive descriptions is the fact that a man so noble and personally free from sensuality as Socrates could calmly discuss the philosophy of fascination with an Athenian harlot, and could contemplate the love of beautiful youths from the standpoint of expediency and taste. I do not discuss the historical accuracy of Paul's account of the decline of religion as antecedent to moral decay. The elucidation of his doctrine does not call for any criticism of his views, but it may be observed that so far as historical data are before us the law of degeneration is clearly exhibited. Ascent has been achieved, but only as the issue of tremendous struggles against the tendency to grow weary of pure theism, and to substitute visible forms and ritualistic observances for the spiritual worship of the Invisible God. The steps of descent from a primitive monotheism are plainly marked in the records of the most ancient Oriental peoples, but not so plainly as in the history of Christianity itself. The despicable superstitions and open idolatry of Southern Italy have no resemblance to the religion of Jesus Christ.

NOTE 36, p. 364.

The following is an exhaustive list of other passages in which *logizomai* occurs outside Rom. iv. where it is used eleven times : Mark xv. 28 ; Luke xxii. 37 ; John xi. 50 ; Acts xix. 27 ; Rom. ii. 3, 26, vi. 11, ix. 8 ; I. Cor. xiii. 5, 11 ; II. Cor. iii. 5, v. 19, x. 2, 7, 11. xi. 5, xii. 6 ; Gal. iii. 6 ; Phil. iv. 8 ; II. Tim. iv. 16 ; Heb. xi. 19 ; Jam. ii. 23 ; I. Pet. v. 12.

## NOTE 37, p. 364.

It is incredible that any doctrine of imputed righteousness can be Biblical which is not hinted at in any passage where the verb "to impute" occurs, but it may be advisable to refer to other passages which are relied upon as "proof texts." The one which is appealed to most plausibly is I. Cor. i. 30, "Christ Jesus who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." But on what principle can we single out one of these great words and connect it with imputation, without treating all alike? If this text proves that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, it proves also that wisdom, sanctification, and redemption are imputed, for each of these terms stands in the same relation as "righteousness" to the verb "was made." No one imagines that God either thinks us wise, or treats us as if we were wise. Were He to do so we should certainly still lack wisdom, but with the additional disadvantage that our education would be arrested. A few unhealthy teachers have preached a doctrine of "imputed sanctification," but it has necessarily led to gross corruption of life. If God were to treat us as being already holy, as Christ is holy, discipline would cease, and conscience would become a false disturber of the peace. Imputed redemption would be less immoral than imputed sanctification, and if any man would be content to have redemption imputed to him, without being actually redeemed, no one need begrudge him such a theological mirage. It would at least give him an effective illustration of the value of a legal imputation, which expresses no real thought in God's mind, and represents no fact of human experience. If God had imputed redemption to the Israelites in Egypt they would still have had to labour in the brickfields, and the irony of their blessing would have been complete if Pharaoh had been graciously pleased to declare that he also regarded them as free!

II. Cor. v. 21 contains no hint of imputation. It speaks of the righteousness of God, not that of Christ, and this phrase must be interpreted in accordance with the whole teaching of Paul under review in Romans. Phil. iii. 9 contains no hint of imputation, and must also be interpreted in the light of Paul's general teaching. The special thought is that Paul abjures any wish to stand before God as a mere keeper of the law even if he could keep it. The righteousness he aspires to attain is

that which he speaks of in Rom. iv. as more real and intrinsically more acceptable to God than any external conformity to law.

## NOTE 38, p. 364.

The interpretation of Scriptural language cannot honestly or rationally be determined by our judgment of its intrinsic value or truth. We are bound to read words in their plain and natural sense, however repulsive and incredible their purport may appear, and however strongly we may desire to discover in them some other meaning. But while interpretations must be freed from all subjective bias, our personal acceptance of a religious doctrine will always be more or less influenced by feeling, and by our ability to cordially "reckon" it true, equitable and godlike. Papists may be content to impute truth to ecclesiastical dogmas which are repugnant to their reason and conscience, but this sort of "assent" is not faith, and tends to destroy intellectual sincerity, and thus conduces to the decay of man's moral nature. For this reason I shall add a few considerations which may help to reconcile some minds to a surrender of the traditional dogma of imputed righteousness.

The idea of vicarious obedience as affirmed by the dogma in question will not bear examination. Vicarious suffering commands our profoundest veneration, for it is the essence of true sacrifice, and sacrifice is the sublimest expression of love. Even vicarious punishment may be so conceived as to lose much of its inherent offensiveness. Indeed, many hearts are so impressed by the benignant purpose, and glorious result of Christ's sufferings on our behalf, that even a perverted theory of their nature fails to offend, because lost in the radiance of grace. When men see that the essential truth of the gospel is that God is glad at any cost to Himself to obviate the necessity of punishing mankind, they magnify the manifested mercy, and in myriads of cases are too much occupied with praise on this account to criticise the supposed expedient by which the exactions of law are taken out of the way. They do not ask what the nail was which fastened these adverse ordinances to the cross; it is enough for them to believe that God has now no legal restraint upon His grace. But when we pass from vicarious suffering on our behalf to contemplate the idea of vicarious obedience, we enter a new region of thought and feeling. God can without loss to His own honour or to His kingdom lay upon His Son a burden of pain;

as the agent of His own redeeming love, the source of a new river of life on earth, through which His own fulness may flow into all receptive souls. But God cannot accept the obedience of one instead of the obedience of another, much less of millions. Punishment may be remitted under conditions which in God's judgment promise a new spirit of obedience, but obedience can never be dispensed.

It must also be insisted that Christ's active obedience could not contain any surplus for transfer to our credit. It is written and not disputed that Jesus was born "under the law." He voluntarily subjected Himself to this responsibility, but this does not alter the fact that He truly did take upon Himself the form of a servant, and the obligation once incurred could not be renounced. As a Son of Man it became His duty to do and suffer the whole will of God, however strange and hard. Nothing could be imposed upon Him which exceeded this obligation; no deduction from it could be allowed on any pretext. His glory is that He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, where He was numbered with the transgressors. The papistical doctrine of supererogation has no ethical or legal validity. No man's obedience can be spared from the world. No man can do more than obey.

This principle demands our assent, but let us hypothetically set it aside. Having done so, it is still clear that whatever advantage may accrue to us from our Lord's voluntary subjection to law, His perfect obedience could not alter God's actual view of our individual characters, or make it wise or right or even merciful for Him to think of or treat us as being other than we are. Whatever Christ was or did we are what we are, and God is not blind, nor can any cloak intercept His vision of the facts. He knows our works and our thoughts. All things are naked and open before Him with whom we have to do, and if we allow any ecclesiastical figment to prevent our hearing with solemn awe what the Spirit is saying to the Churches, Christ will hereafter search us with those eyes of fire which dismayed His servant John, and will fight against us with the sword of His mouth.

This thought leads me to urge that if it were possible for God to really reckon us to be righteous as Christ was, such a delusion would be the most awful calamity which could happen. The Christian's chief hope and comfort is that God can see all his faults, and will deal with them as a wise and faithful Father should, but that while seeing all defects He can also see the

true self, the heart which yearns for holiness as sick men long for health, the mind which serves the will of God, and hates the evil that is done through passion or infirmity. The instinct of such a soul is not to exult in wearing a cloak, or in being reckoned righteous, but to look up as Peter after his great sin looked up to Christ, and say with him, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." The faith which can look up and trust God as greater than the self-condemnatory heart is the only indissoluble link which binds imperfect sons to the perfect Father; and any dogma which tends to shift a man's ground of confidence from faith in God's knowledge to reliance upon His thinking of us more favourably than the facts would justify must militate against simplicity of character, and in the long run must be inimical to faith.

In the more modern form of the dogma that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer, it is confessed that God cannot really think that we are other than we are; but, it is held, that without thinking erroneously, He treats us as if we were, or as if He thought we were, as righteous as Christ. This modified Calvinism avoids an imputation of false judgment to God, but ascribes to Him what is even worse—viz., a determination to divorce action from judgment, and to maintain a permanent discord between deeds and thoughts.

We have already seen that *logizomai* means always a real judgment of the mind; but apart from verbal criticism I would point out how disastrous it would be if God were really to treat us in the way alleged. It may be soothing to think of God opening the door of heaven to us on any pretext, but we know that for all the practical purposes of discipline we need to be treated according to the existing realities of character. This does not mean that we crave to be always punished or chastised as we deserve, but that we are ready to submit to the Father's scourging if needful, and crave just such mercy and such grace to help as each hour of need may require. All Christians wish God to bear their daily confession of partial failure, of shortcomings in duty, of unhallowed feelings, or speech, and their poor and faltering efforts to imitate the righteousness of Christ. Their cry is not for a screen but for searching. "Search me O God!" is the language of all who hunger and thirst after righteousness. They long for daily supplies of impulse, guidance, strength and courage to resume the race set before them. They want in all sincerity to be treated not as if they had already attained, or were already perfect, but as aspirants to become what He promises

to make His children, and while with many stumblings, and occasional faintness, they press on towards the goal unto the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus, their boldest hope is that one day they will see Christ as He is, and at last be perfectly conformed to the likeness of God's dear Son.

NOTE 39, p. 367.

In quoting Luther's estimate of faith with approval I do not commit myself to all his ideas of Justification. His views, as finally polished by Melancthon and adopted in the Augsburg Confession, contain a deplorable misrepresentation of Paul's teaching. In Article IV. it is stated that men are justified "when they believe that they are received into favour and their sins forgiven for Christ's sake who by His death hath satisfied for our sins. This faith doth God impute for righteousness before Him." (Rom. iii. and iv.) This language is open to criticism on several points, but is chiefly objectionable because it confounds an assurance of being received into favour and forgiven, with faith in Jesus Christ, or in "Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." This misstatement of the faith which is reckoned for righteousness is a fatal flaw in Lutheran theology, and has had a calamitous effect. This defect, and its curious origin in a misread chapter of Luther's personal experience, would well repay a special study, but I must content myself here with a brief indication of dissent. The non-Biblical words "*pro nostris peccatis satisfecit*" are indefensible, and the same may be said of "*propter Christum*," but their discussion is not necessary. None of these mistakes can deprive Luther of the credit of adhering to the plain meaning of Paul's assertion that faith is reckoned for righteousness, nor can they weaken the force of his argument that faith renders glory to God, and is not an excuse for vainglory in man. In spite of all incongruities of thought and expression, Luther had a thorough appreciation of the fact that faith is "the truth of the heart" and he gave advice which Christians in this day would be wise to adopt. "Let Christians learn with all diligence to understand this article of Christian righteousness. And to this end let them read Paul, and let them read him again . . . yea, let them compare Paul wholly and fully with himself: then shall they find it to be true, that Christian righteousness consisted in these two things: viz., in faith which giveth glory to God, and in God's imputation . . . *i.e.*, that God will not lay to our charge

the remnant of sin : that He will not punish it, nor condemn us for it : but will cover it and freely forgive it."

NOTE 40, p. 369.

This appears to be the force of the words *τὴν ἐκ Θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει, i. e.*, the righteousness which comes from God upon faith. The expression can best be interpreted in the light of Rom. iv. and indicates the judgment which God graciously pronounces on faith in Christ as that with which He is well pleased.

NOTE 41, p. 381.

It should be superfluous, but may not be inexpedient to glance at the words, "Even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were." These words simply mean that Abraham was accorded a name which signified the father of many, at a time when in his own eyes, and in the eyes of his fellow men, he was not the father of even one child, and was unlikely by reason of age to become a parent. God who quickeneth the dead was able to give him sons, and in His sight the future posterity of the old man were as visible and real as if then alive on earth. In the contemplation of His own purposes God gave the name of Father, and therein announced His gift of posterity. From God it was a gift, but to the man it came as a promise which God was able to perform; and Abraham, in the face of apparent impossibilities, believed in that promise, and took to himself the name which to unbelief would have been a sardonic mockery of his disappointment. That name as given was a true one, and Abraham believed it to be true, and so glorified the power and faithfulness of God to do all that he had said. Clearly there is no paltering with truth in the patriarch's anticipative name, which vividly depicted the future as it lay open to the sight of God, and has been verified in the history of Israel.

NOTE 42, p. 397.

The force of *πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν* not obscurely suggests that the new relation is Godwards, corresponding to the fact that there never was hostility in God towards man. Man is the reconciled party. It will be noted that I do not accept the

reading of the Revised Text. The MSS. do not compel us to read ἔχωμεν, and the drift of Paul's reasoning imperatively demands a definite statement of fact, and forbids a feeble and pointless exhortation.

NOTE 43, p. 401.

In this marvellously condensed philosophy of history, Paul uses some expressions, which standing alone, would teach the baldest universalism, *e.g.* "through one act of righteousness *the free gift came* unto all men to justification of life." Calvin justly pointed out that the preposition (εἰς) must be understood to denote tendency and design, and not as declaring an actual accomplishment of the design. This corresponds to the words of the previous verse, "*they which receive* the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ." This is good exegesis, and good Pauline doctrine. But Calvin unfortunately omitted to expound in the same way the parallel statement "through one trespass *the judgment came* unto (εἰς) all men to condemnation." The force of the preposition must be the same in both these antithetical clauses, and thus we again get good Pauline doctrine, *viz.*, that the natural tendency of transgression to issue in universal condemnation is limited or conditioned by the principle that sin is not imputed where there is no law, and consequently there is no condemnation where (as in the case of infants) the conditions of moral agency do not exist. There is no escape from the dilemma, that if the imputation of sin is universal, without any exceptions covered by Paul's doctrine of responsibility, then the imputation of righteousness is universal, and all men are justified, and worst of all, justified in myriads of cases without the receptive act of faith.

Here then we find a strong confirmation of all that has been previously advanced in exposition of Paul's doctrine. He knows nothing of condemnation for transgressions of unknown law, and nothing of condemnation for an act or for the wounds inflicted by an act which was done (and forgiven we may hope) thousands of years before we came as helpless and unthinking infants into a sin-infested world. The righteousness of God in providing a way of escape from evil for those who have entered upon their existence under such gloomy and hopeless conditions is thus made manifest. Where sin abounded there grace much more abounded; and this grace provides



a gift which all men everywhere are invited to receive. There is only one condition, viz., receptive faith, but this condition is one which even the grace of God cannot conceivably dispense with, or vary in the least degree.

## NOTE 44, p. 416.

The great principle on which Paul relied is copiously expressed in other parts of Scripture. It is the keynote to the practical teaching of the great "Psalm of the Law." "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word . . . Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee" (Psm. cxix. 9-11). It finds a most appropriate place in the psalm which reads like a proem to the sacred songs which follow. "Blessed is the man" who withdraws himself from influences which naturally vitiate the mind, and submits himself to the cleansing and fructifying power of Divine thoughts, which, like irrigating canals, have been brought from the great river of God to fertilise our wilderness. "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psm. i.). This principle also corresponds to the prophetic assurance of thoughts to be revealed from the Divine mind in words which, falling like rain from heaven upon the thirsty, sin-cursed earth, should work a moral transformation comparable to a bringing forth of fir trees for thorns, and myrtle trees instead of the brier, and would induce such joy that mountains and valleys, forests and fields should break forth into song (Isa. lv.).

If psalmists and prophets could believe in the transforming energy of God's thoughts, when these were so imperfectly revealed, how much more surely may it be relied upon when the word of the Lord includes the whole wealth of truth summed up in Christ!

Coming back to the New Testament, we find this principle underlying all its teachings and prominently set forth in many places. Paul's writings teem with it in various forms, *e.g.*, he writes to the Thessalonians, "Ye received from us the word of the message . . . as it is in truth, the word of God which also worketh in you which believe" (I. Thess., ii. 13). To the Colossians he writes, "Let the word of God dwell in you richly" (iii. 16). He exhorts Timothy to abide in the things he

has learned, because able to make him "wise unto salvation" and profitable "for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II. Tim., iii. 14-17). James enunciates the same thought, saying, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth," and adds, "receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls" (i. 18, 21). Peter is very bold, and declares that through the knowledge of Christ God has given us "all things that pertain to life and godliness," and has granted unto us His exceeding great and precious promises that through these we "may become partakers of the Divine nature" (II. Pet., i. 2-4).

But the most beautiful and impressive exhibition of this principle is to be found in the "wholesome words" of Jesus Christ Himself. It is solemnly proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the central idea of the parable of the sower and of the great discourse on Bread. It is implied in the word "Disciple." It is illustrated in Christ's method of training the twelve, and finally our Lord elevated it into the supreme regulative principle of Christian life by making it the theme of His last discourse on the night of His betrayal. Leaving the house in which the last supper had been eaten—itsself a perpetual symbol of the truth that we live by replenishing our thoughts of Christ—the little party passed by the fires in which husbandmen were burning the lopped branches of their vines. Drawing a new image from this vineyard labour, Christ told His friends that they were clean through the word which He had spoken unto them; and then implored them to abide in Him, to keep His words in their minds, to let them have free course through their nature as sap from the root of a vine flows by a law of growth into its branches. He confessed that if unsupplied with vital force through the assimilation of those words which are "spirit and life," His disciples could bring forth no fruit: whereas being mentally nourished from Himself, the fruits of righteousness and service would become their natural product. It is no exaggeration to say that this closing lesson of Christ contains the most distinctive and vital element of Christian ethics. It is this, and this alone, which validates to our reason, and binds upon our consciences those extraordinary demands which, when divorced from the revelation of Divine Truth in Christ, are a mockery of human nature and more cruel than a command to be warmed and fed, if given to one ready to perish of cold and hunger, and without providing fire and food.

## NOTE 45, p. 430.

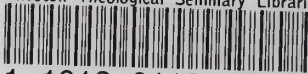
It will be seen that this argument is strictly parallel to that which was drawn from Scripture in disproof of Anselm's plea that what is right in men may not be right in God. The two discussions are independent, but each adds considerably to the force of the other. Cf. p. 69.

THE END





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